

THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

**JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF
VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

CHAIRMAN'S 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

TO

ACTING COMMISSIONER VINCE BURGESS

AND

THE BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES

VIRGINIA -- HOME OF AMERICA'S PATRIOTS

November 30, 2005

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Chairman's Message

During the tenure of Joint Leadership Council (JLC) Chairmen Daniel Miller and Connie O'Neill, the Council has grown from infancy to adulthood. This remarkable maturation is due in great part to the leadership of our previous Chairmen and the collegial cooperation of our member organizations. In the brief span of two years the JLC has grown to a membership of 22 organizations, established its Constitution, Bylaws, Mission, and Vision, and developed common Veterans' Legislative Agendas for both 2005 and 2006. Shared purpose has now become the hallmark of the Joint Leadership Council in both fact and deed.

Our Legislative Agenda for 2006 continues the Joint Leadership Council's traditional support for a third veterans' care center in Hampton Roads; establishment of a third veterans' cemetery in Southwest Virginia and continued funding support for the Virginia War Memorial and its outstanding education programs. In recognition of the ongoing service and sacrifice of our active duty, reserve and guard military members, the JLC is supporting the construction of a Fisher House at McGuire VA Medical Center; in-state tuition for members of the US Armed Forces and their families on duty assignment in Virginia, and funding support for the Virginia Guard's recruiting, retention and family support services. In addition to these most important actions, the JLC supports a one dollar state income tax check off to aid the Department of Veterans Services and a one-time, no-cost single-vehicle registration for Virginia's Veterans.

In endeavoring to seek implementation of its Legislative Agenda for 2006, the Joint Leadership Council has developed a campaign plan that will allow the voice and power of Virginia's Veterans Community to be heard and felt throughout the upcoming 2006 legislative session in Richmond. Both together and separately the Veterans Service Organizations that constitute the Joint Leadership Council will work closely with the Governor, the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services and Legislature of our great Commonwealth to provide support and necessary services to those who have born the burden in the defense of freedom and democracy.

As a necessary bridge between Virginia's Veterans and the government of our Commonwealth, the Joint Leadership Council holds a position of trust and responsibility. The Council accepts this position as a cheerful and honorable duty.

Semper Fidelis,

Frank G. Wickersham III
Chairman
November 30, 2005

Mission and Vision

Mission

The Council provides advice and assistance to the Governor and the Department of Veterans Services on matters of concern to the veterans community, and provides a conduit of information to and from the veterans service organizations on policy and legislation, pending and enacted, as well as information on existing services.

Vision

The Council will:

- *Give the Department of Veterans Services a broader understanding of the services needed by veterans.*
- *Give veterans a broader understanding of the services available to them as citizens of Virginia.*
- *Help veterans and veterans' organizations achieve legislation or policy changes needed to improve veterans' services.*
- *Enhance communications between the public, the state government, and the state's veterans.*
- *Help the Governor and the Department of Veterans Services develop policies that improve services for Virginia's veterans.*
- *Help the General Assembly develop and pass laws that more clearly respond to veterans' needs.*

Joint Leadership Council Overview

Members

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations is composed of one representative from each qualifying VSO in the Commonwealth. The qualifications for JLC representation are spelled out in the Code of Virginia.

As of November 30, 2005, twenty-two Veterans Service Organizations were represented on the JLC. Those organizations are:

- Air Force Association
- American Ex-Prisoners of War
- American Legion
- AMVETS
- AUSA
- Disabled American Veterans
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Homeless & Disabled Veterans
- Korean War Veterans Association
- Legion of Valor of the US, Inc.
- Marine Corps League
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Military Officers Association of America
- National Association of Uniformed Services
- Navy Seabee Veterans of America
- Non Commissioned Officers Association
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Reserve Officers Association of the United States
- Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
- United States Navy Cruiser Sailors Association
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge

Structure

An elected Chairman leads the Joint Leadership Council, assisted by an elected Vice Chairman. The Chairman may appoint three officers – a Secretary/Parliamentarian, a Legislative Officer, and a Chaplain – subject to ratification by the Council.

Though there are no standing committees, the Chairman may, with the consent of the Council, appoint ad hoc committees to accomplish specific tasks. Examples of such committees include the Constitution and Bylaws Review Committee.

Purpose

The JLC's purpose is to address and advocate for the needs of Virginia's veterans.

As spelled out in § 2.2-2682 of the Code of Virginia, the Council shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Advise the Department of Veterans Services regarding (i) methods of providing support for ongoing veterans services and programs, and (ii) addressing veterans issues on an ongoing basis;
2. Recommend issues that may potentially impact veterans of the armed forces of the United States and their Virginia-domiciled surviving spouses, orphans, and dependents;
3. Advise the Department of Veterans Services and the Board of Veterans Services on matters of concern to veterans and their Virginia-domiciled surviving spouses, orphans, and dependents;
4. Promote and support existing veterans services and programs;
5. Recommend and promote implementation of new efficient and effective administrative initiatives that enhance existing veterans services and programs or provide for necessary veterans services and programs not currently provided; and
6. Maintain a nonpartisan approach to maintaining and improving veterans services and programs in the Commonwealth.

Focus Areas – 2005

Discussion at JLC meetings in 2005 focused on a wide range of topics, ranging from education to health care to support of Virginia's Guard and Reserve organizations. Council members followed closely the dedication and initial operation of the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, worked industriously towards the opening of a third veterans cemetery in southwest Virginia and were on hand at the groundbreaking for the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center, now being built adjacent to the McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond.

The issues of most importance to the Council as a whole are captured in the JLC's 2006 Legislative Agenda. Other items of importance to Council members can be seen in the meeting minutes, included below.

2006 Legislative Agenda

A theme commonly expressed at JLC meetings was the importance of the Council speaking as one voice. Nowhere is this more important than in the area of legislation impacting the welfare of Virginia's veterans.

The Joint Leadership Council's 2006 Legislative Agenda is presented on the next page. This agenda was compiled based on member organization inputs. The agenda has been agreed to and is supported by all 22 member organizations. This agenda has presented to the Governor, the Commissioner of Veterans Services, and the Board of Veterans Services for consideration and coordination. The agenda will be the cornerstone of the Joint Leadership Council's efforts during the 2006 General Assembly session.

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
2006 Legislative Agenda
Adopted July 13, 2005

Item #	Description	Action requested	State Agencies responsible	Current Status or Actions Taken
	VETERANS ISSUES			
1.	Third veterans care center	Construct veterans care center in Hampton Roads	DVS	General Assembly added \$50,000 to DVS FY05 budget to conduct planning study DVS included construction funding in Capital Budget request DVS has submitted "pre-application" to USDVA for funding. Project is ranked 128 on USDVA priority list
2.	Third state veterans cemetery	State to purchase land for cemetery in SW Virginia and appropriate necessary operating funds	DVS	DVS working with veterans in SW Virginia to identify and secure potential sites for donation DVS included land purchase and construction funding in Capital Budget request
3.	Virginia War Memorial Education Programs	Appropriate \$250,000 a year for the next five years to fund educational efforts Appropriate \$4.3 million to fund the construction of the new Education Wing	Virginia War Memorial	
4.	Fisher House – McGuire VA Medical Center	Commonwealth to pledge \$1 million in matching funds	DVS Department of Military Affairs	
	ACTIVE DUTY, GUARD, RESERVE ISSUES			
5.	In-state tuition for members of Armed Forces and their families who are stationed in Virginia	Achieve 2 of 3 "desired states" as outlined by Army: 1. Eligibility in state of legal	DVS Department of Education	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. residence 2. Eligibility in state of assignment 3. Continuity of in state eligibility once established 		
6.	Support for Virginia's Guard and Reserve	<p>Achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. increased funding for Virginia Guard recruiting efforts 2. Provide tax credits and other incentives for employers to cover pay off-sets for deployed Guardsmen 3. Assist employers in providing health care subsidies for Guardsmen and their families 4. Create and fund 3 new Guard family support centers 5. Improve state coordination with US National Committee for Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve 		
	ADDITIONAL ISSUES			
7.	State Income Tax Check Off	State income tax \$1 check-off to support the Department of Veterans Services	DVS Department of Taxation	

8.	No Cost Vehicle Registration	No-cost vehicle registration for a single automobile or light truck, per veteran	DVS Department of Motor Vehicles	
9.	Travel reimbursement for JLC members	Change the Code of Virginia so that JLC members may receive travel reimbursement	DVS	DVS will request funds for travel reimbursement in 2006-2008 biennial budget Must be supported by Code change
10.	Security for Virginia War Memorial	Capital Police to provide 24/7 security	Speaker of the House/ Director Virginia war Memorial	On-site security 1600-2400; vehicle patrols all other times

Plans for 2006 and beyond

The first order of business in 2006 will be to work for the passage of the Council's 2006 Legislative Agenda. The Council's leadership has met with the Governor, Commissioner of Veterans Services, and the Board of Veterans Services, and will meet with the newly elected Governor and key legislators during the upcoming 2006 General Assembly session.

The Joint Leadership Council will strive in 2006 for closer ties with the Governor's Office, the Department of Veterans Services, and the Board of Veterans Services. The goal will be to communicate to each of these organizations those issues of concern to Virginia's veteran community. Through advanced coordination and planning such issues may be addressed through the budget and legislative processes of both the Executive and Legislative branches of the Commonwealth's government. To that end, the JLC will work with the Governor, the Commissioner of Veterans Services, and the Chairman of the Board of Veterans Services to develop an action timeline for 2006 and beyond.

Minutes of the January 11, 2005 Meeting

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Tuesday, January 11, 2005, at the offices of the American Legion Department of Virginia, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue, Richmond, Virginia.

Members Present

Jim Aucoin, *American Veterans*; John Bonnell, *Marine Corps League*; George Dumas, *Homeless and Disabled Veterans*; David Ellis, *NAUS*; Paul Fink, *U. S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association*; Robert Gray, *American Ex-Prisoners of War*; Pat Green, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; Michael Hulsey, *Reserve Officers Association of the U.S.*; John Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*; Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*; James Jones, *Korean War Veterans Association*; Jon Mangis, *Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services*; Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*; Connie O'Neill, *American Legion*; Richard Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; R. Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*; and Peter Snelling, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*.

Members Absent

John Anderson, *Chairman, Board of Veterans Services*; Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*; John Dunleavy, *Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge*; Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*; Ronald Shamblin, *Virginia National Guard Association*; Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*; and Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*. Mr. Wickersham was absent because he is serving in Kuwait and Iraq as a Department of Defense support contractor on an urgent armoring project for fuel tankers, as assignment which is expected to last until Spring 2005.

Others Present

C. L. "Bert" Boyd, Chief Deputy Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; Steven Combs, Assistant to the Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; Rhonda Earman, Administrative Supervisor, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; Don Ferguson, Assistant Attorney General; Brenda Hayes; Robert Hayes; John McAnaw, VFW; Anne McKinney, Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Materials Distributed

Meeting Agenda; draft Minutes of the September 7, 2004 and the December 7, 2004 meetings; JLC 2005 Legislative Agenda; Current JLC Constitution and Bylaws, Proposed JLC Constitution and Bylaws, and Summary of Changes to JLC Constitution and Bylaws; Proposed JLC Mission and Vision Statements; January 6, 2005, letter from Commissioner Mangis to Interested Veteran Advocates; December 17, 2004, letter from Board of Veterans Services Chairman John Anderson to Governor Warner; Governor Warner's 2004-2006 budget amendment proposal for Department of Veterans Services; Department of Planning and Budget document – "2005 Findings and Recommendations of Department of Veterans Services Study Group;" USDVA Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures for FY 2003; Resolutions of the Military Order of the Purple Heart

relating to Commissary and Exchange Privileges for Purple Heart Recipients, et. al., Free Tuition for Purple Heart Recipients, Korean War Memorial at Hampton Roads, and Illinois Military Family Relief Fund

Call to Order

With 13 of 22 members present, Chairman O'Neill called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. Messrs. Ellis, Fink and Rinaldo arrived after the meeting began. Mr. O'Neill welcomed guests, John McAnaw of the VFW, Anne McKinney of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and veterans advocates, Brenda and Robert Hayes.

Approval of Minutes

A **motion** was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the September 7, 2004 meeting with the following changes:

Page 1 – Members Present

Thomas Snee was not present at the meeting and, therefore, his name should be deleted from this section.

Steven Combs' name should be deleted from this section.

Jim Walker's name should be deleted from this section.

Page 1 – Others Present

Jim Walker's name should be added to this section.

A **motion** was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2004, meeting, as drafted.

Chairman's Report

Chairman O'Neill began his comments by saying there had been significant progress in the DVS budget picture that will give greater importance to the state's veterans programs and services. Chairman O'Neill said that the most important item on the JLC Legislative Agenda, Number 1 relating to increased funding for DVS, has been partially addressed in the Governor's proposed budget amendments. Chairman O'Neill emphasized the importance of the JLC achieving a quorum at meetings so that the Council may continue to be a viable force in advocating for veterans in the Commonwealth.

Report of the Constitution and By-Laws Review Committee

Copies of the current JLC Constitution and By-Laws and the proposed versions of both documents were distributed to all members present. Members were advised that the proposed changes to the Constitution and By-Laws would be discussed at the next meeting, and, if approved, adopted. It was suggested that DVS staff send copies of the proposed Constitution and Bylaws to Council members who were absent from the meeting.

Dan Miller made a **motion** that the number constituting a quorum at meetings be reduced, and that Article IV.1.e of the Constitution be revised accordingly. Discussion

followed and a question was raised about the legality of such a change. Don Ferguson advised that the current quorum requirement is set out in Va. Code § 2.2-2681, and that any changes to it would need to come in the form of an amendment to that statute. Further discussion followed, and it was agreed that the Council should ask the General Assembly to amend the Code of Virginia such that seven (7) voting members would constitute a quorum at JLC meetings. The amended motion was seconded and passed, with Peter Snelling dissenting.

Report of the Mission and Vision Statement Committee

Richard Rinaldo presented the proposed Mission and Vision Statements to the Council for consideration. George Dumas raised the concern that some of the items in the statements might be too ambitious and cautioned that it would be best not to include things the Council does not have the resources to accomplish. It was emphasized that the JLC is a portal to the member VSOs, which have the capacity to accomplish large-scale objectives. Mr. Jasper then noted that the Military Order of the Purple Heart recently had passed several resolutions at the national level that were prompted by Commissioner Mangis. A **motion** was made to adopt the proposed Mission and Vision Statements, as drafted. The motion was seconded and passed, with Dr. Dumas dissenting.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Mangis began his report by thanking the Council for a good turnout for the meeting and welcomed the guests in attendance.

Commissioner Mangis advised the Council that the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) had conducted a study of the immediate fiscal needs of DVS and presented its findings to the Board of Veterans Services on December 13. While no new positions were recommended by DPB, the recommendation was to “fully fund” the agency and fill all currently authorized positions. This recommendation is reflected in Governor Warner’s budget amendment proposal for the agency. Commissioner Mangis outlined the positions that would be filled if this measure is passed by the General Assembly, including hiring 5 veterans service representatives to fill vacant positions, and the conversion of 2 part-time veterans service representative positions to full-time status. Commissioner Mangis added that the DPB study also recommended funding to develop a much-needed training manual for veterans service representatives.

Commissioner Mangis said Board Chairman John Anderson sent a letter to the Governor in December thanking him for his recommendation to fully fund all positions, and asking that the Commonwealth provide a level of additional funding such that the per capita number of Veterans Service Representatives in the Commonwealth meet the median of the number of such representatives in surrounding states like North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, etc. Dr. Anderson’s letter also requested additional funding to support the conversion of the part-time administrative assistant position at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia to full-time status.

Commissioner Mangis said that Dr. Anderson has appointed an ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee to examine the needs and objectives for DVS and make recommendations for the 2006-2008 biennial budget. Commissioner Mangis noted that demographics, such

age, disabilities, geographic location, etc., that provide a picture of the specific needs of various veterans populations will be considered in the budget planning. Needs specific to field offices, itinerate service locations, technology, etc., also will be considered. Commissioner Mangis noted that the Board will seek the JLC's input into the strategic planning process and emphasized the importance of the VSOs in advocating in support of the DVS 2006-2008 budget proposal once it has been developed.

Commissioner Mangis also informed the Council that two of the five legislative members who sit on the Board, Delegates Cox and Watts, intend to sponsor budget amendments during the 2005 General Assembly session that would augment the Governor's budget proposal for more service officers and provide a mechanism that would guarantee the state's share of funding to add the 80 domiciliary beds that have been cut from the Sitter-Barfoot Care Center. Commissioner Mangis said this measure would not impede the care center's construction, which is expected to begin in March 2005.

Commissioner Mangis emphasized that in addition to the VSOs advocating in support of the Governor's budget proposal at the organizational level, it is vitally important that Council members contact their own legislators individually, by writing letters, sending e-mails and telephoning their offices.

Commissioner Mangis provided the information about the Virginia War Memorial that was requested at the last meeting. Prior to 2003, there were approximately 10,000 – 12,000 visitors to the Memorial, annually. In 2003 and 2004, that number jumped to approximately 18,000. In 2005, the number is expected to reach approximately 30,000, due in large part to the "Virginians at War" exhibits and educational program.

Commissioner Mangis also addressed the proposal for Veterans Preference in employment and other areas. He said that Virginia, like most states, has moved away from a test or a "scored" employment applications, a mechanism that typically is used to determine factors like veterans status. Commissioner Mangis said he is still working on this initiative and will be getting in touch with Dan Miller later to discuss it further.

Commissioner Mangis informed the Council of a letter he had received from a retired Merchant Marine expressing his dissatisfaction that the Merchant Marine shield was not displayed at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk. In a letter sent to the veteran, Commissioner Mangis explained that approximately 30 organizations had received active military status during World War II, a number too great to recognize at the cemetery. Commissioner Mangis advised the veteran that the decision was made to recognize only the five uniformed services and assured him that no slight to any of the other organizations, including the Merchant Marines, was intended. A suggestion was made to recognize some of these organizations by naming cemetery streets after them. Mr. Snelling raised concerns about the Commonwealth's current organizational structure as it relates to the Department of Veterans Services, namely that the Commissioner must report through the Secretary of Administration to the Governor. He said he believes this arrangement is creating a barrier to moving veterans' initiatives through the state system. Commissioner Mangis responded that, technically, he reports to the Governor, but that for administrative purposes, DVS falls under the guidance of the Secretary of

Administration. Commissioner Mangis said that thus far, this arrangement has been useful in obtaining assistance from agencies such as the Department of General Services (DGS) that also report to the Secretary of Administration. For example, DGS project management and engineering staff worked very hard, and provided an enormous amount of technical expertise, in the construction of the Horton Cemetery and getting the Sitter-Barfoot Care Center project up and running.

Dr. Dumas requested that Commissioner Mangis spend a few minutes responding to Mrs. Hayes' concerns about the level of services to veterans, and Commissioner Mangis responded to Mrs. Haye's concerns.

Old Business

Chairman O'Neill informed the Council that the JLC 2005 Legislative Agenda had been presented to the Board of Veterans Services on December 13. Mr. O'Neill encouraged the JLC member-VSOs to support the agenda at the organizational level when advocating for veterans programs with state legislators. He added that he will add the proposed quorum requirement reduction as an item on the Agenda. Mr. Green informed the Council that that the donation of a building site in Dublin for the proposed veterans cemetery in Southwest Virginia is being negotiated and has received tentative approval. Mr. Green urged JLC members to ask their VSOs to support the proposal to construct a veterans cemetery in Southwest Virginia.

Mr. Miller informed the Council that a JLC resolution for a "Hire Vets First Month" has been developed and will be submitted to the Governor for his consideration and approval. The resolution is being sought in conjunction with the federal Hire Vets First initiative.

A question was raised as to how JLC could be instrumental in raising private funds for veterans programs, and Commissioner Mangis said that was the primary purpose of the Veterans Service Foundation. Chairman O'Neill said the JLC could assist with this process by exploring private donation opportunities and bringing the ideas back to the Council. Mr. Green asked that DVS staff send him information on the Foundation and a list of its Board of Trustees.

A question was raised as to the status of the Roanoke Care Center Citizens Advisory Committee. Before the issue could be discussed, Mr. Jasper pointed out that the Care Center's Community Relations Committee (CRC) had met recently and discussed the issues of ambulance charges, the canteen project, and electronic beds. It is the position of the CRC that the amount the vendor providing ambulance service from the Salem VA Medical Center to the VVCC is excessive, and this matter is being investigated further. The canteen project has not yet taken off, because there is not sufficient volunteer staff to support it. Mr. Jasper asked Council members to go back to their VSOs and request volunteers to support the staffing of this project. The CRC also would like for all beds at the VVCC to be electric and is seeking the support for this project from the VSOs. Mr. Green agreed to bring this matter up with the Roanoke Valley Veterans Council. Mr. Jasper also noted that all of the VVCC renovations should be completed in the next few months.

Mr. Jones suggested that because the VA hospitals have the largest concentration of veterans, that benefits offices should be located in them. Mr. Mangis said there is no money in the current year's budget to support this, but he will consider this suggestion in the next biennial budget process. It was noted that the VA medical centers will furnish office space and telephone service free of charge for DVS benefits offices.

Public Comments

Brenda Hayes spoke in support of Virginia's veterans and said she is embarrassed that veterans in the Commonwealth do not have as many benefits as those living in other states, and that there are not enough service officers to meet the demand. Ms. Hayes also said there is not enough communication between DVS and Virginia's veterans about what services and programs are available to them. Mrs. Hayes also noted that access to the Richmond field office is limited because of physical barriers to the disabled and lack of adequate parking. Ms. Hayes also suggested that information on veterans cemeteries be provided to veterans' spouses and family members for estate planning purposes.

Commissioner Mangis responded that DVS has developed an electronic veterans newsletter that is distributed to VSOs and posted on the DVS web site. Mr. Mangis said that if and when funding to support the expense can be obtained, a hard copy of the newsletter will be mailed to these groups. Commissioner Mangis said that DVS also holds Supermarkets of Veterans Benefits across the state throughout the year, which are designed to reach veterans in more remote, rural areas of the state. Commissioner Mangis emphasized that, when comparing veterans benefits of different states, it is important not to compare "apples to oranges." While some states spend more total dollars than Virginia, it should be remembered that many have more programs and facilities like care centers, cemeteries, etc., than does Virginia. In addition, every state's organizational structure is different – some contract with private vendors and VSOs for benefits support.

A **motion** was made, seconded and passed unanimously to establish and ad hoc committee to examine Virginia's veterans benefits as compared to other states, and Mr. Rinaldo agreed to chair the group, which will be called the "Sub-committee on States' Benefits."

Anne McKinney echoed Mrs. Hayes' comments and emphasized how important it is for VSOs to advocate at the state and national level to help veterans get the benefits and services they deserve. Ms. McKinney stressed the significance of contacting legislators like Delegates Cox and Watts, who are championing measures like the budget amendment for the Sitter-Barfoot Care Center, and praised the Board of Veterans Services for establishing the Strategic Planning Sub-Committee.

John McAnaw of the VFW spoke in support of the urgent need for more veterans service officers, as well as other items on the VFW's list of priorities, including adding the 80 domiciliary beds that have been cut from the Sitter-Barfoot Care Center; and round-the-clock security for the Virginia War Memorial, so that the more valuable exhibits may be displayed. Mr. McAnaw cited statistics to demonstrate the need for more veterans service officers, especially in remote areas of the state. Mr. McAnaw noted the disparity

between the amount of VA compensation flowing into the state and the number of service officers needed to serve the more than 755,000 veterans in Virginia. Mr. McAnaw emphasized that revenue generated from VA compensation finds its way into the Virginia economy. Mr. McAnaw said that it is the recommendation of the VFW that DVS add at least 9 new veterans service representative positions, and 5 new administrative support positions.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the JLC was scheduled for February 23, 2005, at 11:00 a.m., at the American Legion Department of Virginia, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond. Mr. Bonnell made a **motion** to change the Bylaws to establish that all JLC meetings be held in Richmond because of its central location. The motion was seconded, but defeated by a vote of 5 in favor, and 7 against.

Mr. Green suggested sending JLC meeting notices to media outlets across the state as Public Service Announcements.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously that the JLC officially recognize the American Legion Department of Virginia for its hospitality and use of its facilities for JLC meetings.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Minutes of the February 23, 2005 Meeting

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Wednesday, February 23, 2005, at the offices of the American Legion Department of Virginia, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue, Richmond, Virginia.

Members Present

Jim Aucoin, *American Veterans*; John Bonnell, *Marine Corps League*; Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*; George Dumas, *Homeless and Disabled Veterans*; David Ellis, *NAUS*; Robert Gray, *American Ex-Prisoners of War*; Pat Green, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; Michael Hulsey, *Reserve Officers Association of the U.S.*; John Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*; Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*; James Jones, *Korean War Veterans Association*; Jon Mangis, *Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services*; Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*; Connie O'Neill, *American Legion*; Richard Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; R. Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*; Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*; Peter Snelling, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*; and Samuel Wilder, *Association of the United States Army*.

Members Absent

John Anderson, *Chairman, Board of Veterans Services*; John Dunleavy, *Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge*; Paul Fink, *U. S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association*; Ronald Shamblin, *Virginia National Guard Association*; Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*; and Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*. Mr. Wickersham was absent because he is serving in Kuwait and Iraq as a Department of Defense support contractor on an urgent armoring project for fuel tankers, as assignment which is expected to last until Spring 2005.

Others Present

Ronnie Blythwood, Director, Hire Vets First Initiative, Veterans Employment and Training Service Philadelphia Region, U. S. Department of Labor; Steven Combs, Assistant to the Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; Rhonda Earman, Administrative Supervisor, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; Don Ferguson, Assistant Attorney General; Paul Hinkhouse, Director, Commonwealth of Virginia Office, Veterans Employment and Training Service, U. S. Department of Labor; Donald Kaiserman, Richmond Area Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America – substituting for Mr. Wickersham; William Leighty, Governor Warner's Chief of Staff; Jerry Lindsey, Veterans Service Coordinator, Virginia Employment Commission; John McAnaw, VFW; Anne McKinney, Paralyzed Veterans of America; Bill Offutt, Executive Director, Hire Vets First Initiative, Veterans Employment and Training Service, U. S. Department of Labor; Terry Schaefer, Veterans Program Specialist, Commonwealth of Virginia Office, Veterans Employment and Training Service, U. S. Department of Labor; Patricia Sykes, Veterans Program Specialist, Commonwealth of Virginia Office, Veterans Employment and Training Service, U. S. Department of Labor.

Materials Distributed

Meeting Agenda; draft Minutes of the January 11, 2005, meeting; copy of Certificate of Recognition signed by Governor Warner and Secretary of the Commonwealth Rimler, recognizing March 2005 as "Hire Veterans First Month;" existing JLC Constitution and Bylaws and Proposed JLC Constitution and Bylaws; Memorandum Report No. 1 from the JLC ad-hoc Subcommittee on States' Veterans Benefits; summary of veterans and related legislation in the 2005 General Assembly Session; information flyer and schedule for the 2005 Supermarkets of Veterans Benefits; copy of *The Value of Veterans* article excerpted from Business Week magazine; copy of January 24, 2005, letter from state Delegate Stephen Shannon to Dr. Dumas; program for the Military of the World Wars Roanoke Chapter, Region IV's 19th Annual Massing of the Colors; and Winter 2005 edition of *Virginia Veterans News*.

Call to Order

With 14 of 23 voting members present, Chairman O'Neill called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. Messrs. Aucoin, Ellis, Rinaldo, and Sacra arrived shortly after the meeting began, for a total of 18 of 23 voting members present.

Mr. O'Neill welcomed guests, John McAnaw of the VFW, Anne McKinney of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the representatives from the Hire Vets First initiative of the U. S. Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service, and Jerry Lindsey of the Virginia Employment Commission.

Presentation of Governor Warner's Certificate of Recognition – Hire Veterans First Month

Governor Warner's Chief of Staff, Bill Leighty, was in attendance to present a Certificate of Recognition signed by Governor Warner and Secretary of the Commonwealth Rimler, recognizing March 2005, as "Hire Veterans First Month."

Mr. Leighty began his remarks by saying he was a former Marine and that several of his family members had served in the military, which he believes gives him a good perspective on veterans issues. Mr. Leighty recognized the JLC for its efforts with the "Hire Veterans First Month" initiative and presented the recognition certificate on behalf of the Governor to JLC Chairman Connie O'Neill.

Mr. Leighty was asked about pending legislation and budget amendments relating to restoring the domiciliary beds that have been cut from the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center and the addition of more veterans service officers. Mr. Leighty explained that different versions of the bills and budget amendments had passed through both chambers and that a Joint Conference Committee, on which Delegate Cox serves, will address the differences.

Mr. Leighty said he realizes that the budget amendments Governor Warner proposed for DVS are less than what many Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) had hoped for, but that the Governor wanted to approach funding levels in a progressive manner. Mr.

Leighty also said the Governor understands the significant return in revenue for the Commonwealth for every dollar spent on veterans programs and services.

Commissioner Mangis added that House Bill 2850, which would restore the domiciliary beds, had passed both houses, and that the related budget amendment is before the Joint Conference Committee. Mr. Mangis explained that if the legislation and budget amendment are approved by the General Assembly, the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center project would be placed in Priority One status with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) State Veterans Home Program, and DVS then would make application for the construction grant funding. The entire process could take 3 to 5 years.

John McAnaw of the VFW expressed his belief that House Bill 2851 provides for only a minimum level of service officers and itinerate service delivery, and that more funding is needed if Virginia's veterans are going to receive the services they deserve. Mr. McAnaw asked Mr. Leighty what is being done this legislative session to restore the domiciliary beds cut from the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center. Mr. Leighty replied that even if the bill and budget amendment associated with this project do not pass, Governor Warner's administration will find a way to support the Commonwealth's 35% share of the project.

Connie O'Neill reported that during the American Legion's "Day on the Hill" meeting with Governor Warner, Legion representatives told the Governor that while they appreciated the increased funding he had proposed for DVS, requests for additional funds would be submitted by members of the General Assembly. Mr. O'Neill stated that Governor Warner supported this idea and said that he wants his administration to be remembered for its strong support for veterans.

Mr. Leighty also said that Delegate Frank Hall had introduced a budget amendment to cover the increased costs of tuition and fees passed from colleges and universities to Virginia National Guard Soldiers. The funding would continue a highly successful program that rewards soldiers for recruiting new enlistees and would support a retirement incentive available to Guardsmen who remain in the Guard for at least twenty years.

Mr. Leighty noted that Governor Warner had met with a research group from the Rand Corporation in an effort to learn more about veterans population demographics and veterans needs in general. Mr. Leighty said that Governor Warner believes it is important to be sensitive to the needs of all veterans, not just those who served in combat.

Mr. Leighty advised the Council that National Guard and Reserve strength is being addressed by the National Governor's Conference. Governor Warner also has consulted with the Virginia Adjutant General for his recommendations on the changing role of the Guard and Reserve, including such issues as deployment and the amount of training necessary to prepare for deployment.

Dr. Dumas asked if the Governor is a veteran himself, and what specifically he is doing to help Virginia's veterans. Mr. Leighty responded that while Governor Warner is not a veteran himself, his father was. As such, Governor Warner learned early in life that

America needs to do more to serve those who have served our country. When Governor Warner took office, he recognized that programs and services for Virginia's veterans were fragmented, and he took steps to consolidate those services into the Department of Veterans Services, creating a strategic vision for veterans in the Commonwealth. Governor Warner also appointed Commissioner Mangis, who has an enormous amount of experience in military affairs and service to veterans on the national and state levels. In addition, Governor Warner created Virginia's first council of veterans service organizations to advise the Department of Veterans Services on veterans issues, services and programs.

Mr. Snelling asked about the possibility of Governor Warner appointing a Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Leighty responded that because of the short time remaining in Governor Warner's administration, it was unlikely such a secretariat would be appointed.

When asked if the Governor's Office would publicize the Hire Veterans First Month initiative, Mr. Leighty said that the information would be posted on the Governor's Web page and sent to all state agency heads. Mr. Leighty added that House Bill 2428 patroned by Delegate Cole, which would strengthen a veterans hiring preference for state and local government, has passed both Chambers. This legislation also provides for a special hiring preference for disabled veterans.

Approval of Minutes

A **motion** was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2005 meeting with the following changes:

Page 1 – Members Present – Add David Ellis's name and organization.

Page 1 – Members Absent – Delete David Ellis's name and organization. Add *Mr. Wickersham was absent because he is serving in Kuwait and Iraq as a Department of Defense support contractor on an urgent armoring project for fuel tankers, an assignment which is expected to last until Spring 2005.*

Page 2 – Call to Order – Add David Ellis's name to those who arrived late.

Page 5 – Commissioner's Update, Last ¶ – Add *"Dr. Dumas requested that Commissioner Mangis spend a few minutes responding to Mrs. Hayes' concerns about the level of services to veterans, and Commissioner Mangis responded to Mrs. Hayes' concerns."*

Page 5 – Old Business, First ¶ – Add *"Mr. Green informed the Council that the donation of a building site in Dublin for the proposed Southwest Virginia veterans cemetery is being negotiated and has received tentative approval."*

Unfinished Business (Chairman's Report)

Chairman O'Neill began his comments by saying Delegate Cox had asked him to address the February 15 meeting of the Senate Finance Committee, where several veterans bills and related budget amendments were heard. Mr. O'Neill said Paul Galanti of the Board of Veterans Services also spoke in support of funding to restore the domiciliary beds at the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center and for additional veterans service representatives. Mr. O'Neill told the Finance Committee that the JLC member organizations represented over 120,000 veterans. Mr. O'Neill said the Committee members were moved by the number of veterans who attended the hearing and by the comments that were made in support of the need for additional funding for veterans programs and services. The veterans who attended the meeting received an ovation from all present. Mr. O'Neill emphasized how important this type of advocacy and collaboration is in helping improve services to Virginia's veterans and that with full participation by JLC member organizations, Virginia veterans can be a powerful voice in the legislative process.

Mr. O'Neill reported that Jon Hatfield of the Virginia War Memorial was ill and could not make the meeting as planned. Mr. Hatfield will attend a future meeting to report on the activities at the War Memorial, including the successful "Virginians at War" program which has been well-received by the public school systems across the state. Mr. McAnaw noted that a bill that would provide 24-hour security at the War Memorial also is in joint conference committee.

Mr. O'Neill reviewed each of the items in the 2005 Legislative Update. With respect to Item Number 3, Mr. Green noted that he is arranging for land to be donated for the proposed veterans cemetery in Southwest Virginia, purchase of the property would not be necessary. Commissioner Mangis added that the USDVA State Cemetery Grants Program would evaluate any identified sites prior to donation to ensure that it meets the criteria for a construction grant. If a potential site meets USDVA requirements, then it is likely it would be donated to the Veterans Services Foundation, which would hold the land in trust until construction began. Mr. Mangis said that because the USDVA generally looks favorably upon such transfers, it is possible the project could be completed within two years.

With respect to Item Number 4, Steven Combs noted that the War Memorial would need to come up with 50% of the estimated \$100,000 needed to fund the design of the education wing, which would trigger the Commonwealth's matching grant. The Commonwealth would then fund the construction and operating costs. Mr. Combs said that Jon Hatfield of the War Memorial would likely contact VSOs across the state to solicit donations for the design cost.

Sam Wilder asked whether allocations for the Governor's capital improvement projects need approval by General Assembly. Commissioner Mangis said the funds are part of the Governor's long-range capital improvement plan.

Mr. O'Neill then welcomed Mr. Wilder as a new member of the JLC. Discussion followed as to why the Vietnam Veterans of America were not represented on the

Council. Commissioner Mangis responded that an invitation to join the JLC was made to that organization, but that so far, the organization had taken no action regarding JLC membership.

Discussion then turned to JLC meeting quorum determinations, and a suggestion was made to allow alternates or designees to attend on behalf of members appointed to serve on the Council. Mr. Ferguson emphasized that if that were to occur, the enabling Code of Virginia statute would need to be amended by the General Assembly. Mason Botts volunteered to chair a subcommittee to study this proposal, and Pat Green agreed to serve with him.

Dr. Dumas praised the Commissioner's Office staff for mailing agenda packets and contacting members by telephone to remind them of meetings.

Mr. Snelling emphasized the importance of all the VSOs coalescing to speak with one voice to law and policy makers. Everyone agreed it would be a good idea to plan well in advance for the next General Assembly session and to agree upon consistent and unified legislative agenda items. Mr. Mangis added that VSOs in some states present their legislative agenda items through a veterans service council like the JLC to achieve the objective of unification and consistency. Mr. Mangis reminded everyone that the JLC serves in an advisory role to the Board of Veterans Services. Mr. Mangis suggested there be JLC "Days on the Hill" that would augment similar efforts of the individual VSOs.

Report of the Constitution and By-Laws Review Committee

After discussion, a **motion** was made and seconded to adopt the Proposed Constitution and Bylaws, as drafted. The motion passed with Mr. Wilder abstaining.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Mangis began his report by welcoming new member Mr. Wilder.

Mr. Mangis reported that the concerns raised by Brenda Hayes about veterans services for her husband at the last JLC meeting had been resolved to her satisfaction.

Commissioner Mangis thanked the JLC members for their efforts in asking Governor Warner to declare March 2005 as "Hire Vets First Month" and their support for a veterans hiring preference in state and local government. Mr. Mangis said he was concerned about the number of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who become homeless, and emphasized the importance of supporting employment and housing initiatives for them. Commissioner Mangis reported that DVS had participated in veterans jobs fairs and sponsored two Supermarkets of Veterans Benefits over the past year. Commissioner Mangis said that DVS will host four Supermarket events in 2005 and urged the Council members to publicize these events with their VSOs.

Commissioner Mangis said that the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk is conducting three times the number of burials as the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia and asked that Council members help publicize the services offered at the Amelia location. Mr. Mangis said that Cemetery Administrator Dan Kemano has

done an excellent job in achieving an aesthetic quality at both cemeteries and welcomes visits from Council members and others. Commissioner Mangis praised the hard work and dedication of Chief Deputy Commissioner Bert Boyd in seeing the Suffolk cemetery project to completion and ensuring that the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center project stays on track.

Commissioner Mangis said that there still are some sticking points between the House and Senate on legislation and budget amendments and, therefore, the General Assembly might not adjourn as scheduled. Commissioner Mangis emphasized that although the Governor's budget proposals for DVS are not at the level hoped for, they fully fund all currently authorized Full-Time Employee (FTE) levels, including two accounting positions. Mr. Mangis said one of the accounting positions may be structured to serve in an audit capacity for the Virginia Veterans Care Center. The Governor's proposal also provides the funds for two full-time groundskeepers at the Horton cemetery and the conversion of two cemetery part-time positions to full-time status.

Mr. Mangis emphasized that even if the legislation and budget amendments to fund the Commonwealth's 35% of restoring the domiciliary beds at the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center pass, it will take 3-5 years to complete the project because of the USDVA administrative process involved. Commissioner Mangis advised the Council that President Bush recommended a moratorium on state veterans home funding in his budget proposal to Congress. Mr. Mangis said that legal issues surrounding the property transfer are being worked out between the USDVA and the Office of the Attorney General, and that groundbreaking probably will take place in early April. DVS also will complete a list of USDVA checklist items by the March 14 deadline.

Commissioner Mangis expressed concern that language in House Bill 2851 creates too much administrative detail and oversight, which could be counterproductive to the interests of veterans. The House has rejected the Senate Amendment that the provisions of the bill not become effective unless general funds are appropriated for it. However, if the budget amendment passes, and the bill fails, the appropriation still will be made to DVS. Mr. Mangis also said that the bill as introduced, does not provide for employee training, office operations, or travel expenses. The Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) and the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), in separate fiscal impact evaluations, identified these shortfalls, though the shortfall amounts differed between the two studies.

New Business

Richard Rinaldo presented Report No. 1 of the ad-hoc Subcommittee on States' Veterans Benefits. Mr. Rinaldo said that overall, it appears Virginia is doing well as compared to most states. Virginia spends more per capita than North Carolina, but less than Georgia. Mr. Rinaldo said that the next step could involve the Commissioner requesting that his peers provide demographic data from their states and make recommendations for a model benefits program in Virginia. Commissioner Mangis said it is important to compare "apples to apples" when evaluating the data.

Mr. Ellis added, "I want you to know that I was there when Connie O'Neill spoke to the Senate Finance Committee on February 15. The Committee members gave him their earnest attention, and when he said he represented the JLC and 23 veterans' service organizations from across the Commonwealth, I noticed that several of the Senators and their staff were doing a quick tally of all the 'hats' in the room. I stopped counting after I counted 117, and that was just most of those who wore 'hats' (NAUS members do not wear a 'hat' and do most of their work with blazer and tie, buttonholing members of Congress and key staffers). There were five of us up from Fredericksburg, including the Commander of VFW Post 3103, Ben Thomas. As there were so many veterans in the hearing room, I knew immediately what was going through the minds of those Committee members, as their reaction reminded me of a conversation I had had with U.S. Senator John Warner."

Mr. Ellis went on to say, "Senator Warner once remarked to me that his job privileged him to meet some of the finest citizens and persons of influence in our country. He said he always listened to what a new acquaintance had to say, because he felt he could learn something from those who wanted to speak to him. The downside was that he couldn't keep track of everyone, but he knew that at the end of the day, only two things amounted to a hill of beans: how many votes the new acquaintance represented, or how much money the new acquaintance could bring to the table. He went on to say that he had plenty of ideas coming out of his ears and even more new ideas offered from everyone he encountered, but when he met someone new, he was thinking first of how many votes and how much money was he looking at. That's just a fact of life in politics, whether here in Virginia or up on 'the Hill' at the U.S. Congress."

Mr. Ellis continued his remarks by saying, "So, when Connie said he represented the JLC and 23 veterans' service organizations, and those Senators saw all of those 'hats,' it must have been a terrifying moment, and they were thinking how many votes and how much money they were looking at. In a very real sense, Connie put the Assembly on notice that we are ready to do serious business and it will be in their interest to seriously consider what we have to say. Later, I got several e-mail responses from delegates and senators to whom I had sent e-mail notes and snail mail letters. The word was on the street and it was the 'hats' that got their attention. This may be a hard card to play in the future, but it worked on February 15. Both of the bills we were concerned about passed."

Mr. Ellis also said, "I think it is important for us to consider that we are running into other shoals and shallows in dealing with federal and state officials. While we must deal with reality, we also must consider the perceptions of others. Mr. Ellis added that recently:

- A delegate asked about various initiatives that the JLC has discussed, and he asked if it wasn't true that the USDVA was responsible for our veterans. I said that in the main, that was true, but the VA was dropping the ball in too many instances. The delegate then said, to my utter surprise, that perhaps 'we (the Commonwealth of Virginia) shouldn't be too quick to take up the slack because it just lets the feds off the hook!'

- In a conversation with a member of the U.S. Congress, I was pointing out how veterans had been incrementalized and how unfair the matter of just compensation was being ignored. To my utter surprise, the Congressman said ‘there are many on ‘the Hill’ who think the veterans have come up here with their hat in hand one time too many!’
- I was told a DoD paper to the U.S. Congress, which was probably authored by David Chu and approved by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, said ‘the proposed cuts to the U.S.V.A. budget were not excessive since (!) veterans appear to be over compensated as it is.’

Mr. Ellis also said, “what we need to do through the JLC and our differing organizations is ensure a coordinated effort and to work with the Coalition and the NAUS PAC that is spearheading our common agenda, day-to-day, to educate and win the support of the U.S. Congress, one member at a time. Perhaps we need to revisit the whole issue of uniformed services health care – we may have made a fundamental error in agreeing to fees and co-pays for TRICARE services. Look what’s happened – some want to see to it that veterans must pay fees and co-pays for access to the U.S.V.A., based on the TRICARE model and ignoring the promises to more than one generation of those in uniform that their medical needs would be met! Maybe we need to demand fair play in treating the compensation due disabled veterans instead of agreeing to incrementalized and divide the disabled based on some bureaucrat’s schedule! The Commissioner (Jon Mangis) has asked us to get our various legislative agendas to him, so that DVS can use that information to craft its own budget needs, and I think we should respond with gusto.”

Mr. Ellis also said, “I think we need to encourage the Commonwealth and the federal government to extend tax credits to employers who lose and should rehire employees who are mobilized and serve in our nation’s uniform. Even if they hire a temporary employee during the interim, the employer is out hard cash investments and training provided the absent employee. Without some relief, beginning at the state level of taxation, employers will not long tolerate a labor force that is also a part of the reserves or National Guard. We also need to pay close attention to the analysis being developed by Richard Rinaldo and the JLC Subcommittee on States’ Veterans Benefits – if Pennsylvania and North Carolina or others find it in their interests to provide income tax exemptions for military pensions or V.A. disability compensation, in order to retain and encourage military retirees and veterans in their states’ economic development plans, perhaps Virginia should do so, too.”

Mr. Ellis ended his remarks by saying, “we should all do what we can to make sure that returning veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq do not have to endure what happened to veterans returning from Korea or Vietnam. Wherever possible, we should make sure we have a ‘Homecoming’ celebration, parade, or something for our returning troops. (The JLC’s MOPH representative noted the ‘19th Annual Massing of the Colors’ on February 20 that, in part, addressed the concern to salute our returning troops and commend them for a difficult job well done.) We hope to have a ‘Homecoming’ parade and celebration in July for our friends and neighbors returning with our hometown Army National Guard unit in Fredericksburg. Thank you for allowing me to voice my concerns and views.”

Mr. Ellis noted that he had provided Commissioner Mangis with a copy of the *Uniformed Services Journal* for January/February, in which the NAUS “Legislative Goals for the 109th Congress” are listed on pages 7 – 8.

Roundtable Discussion

Peter Snelling reported that he had visited the Virginia Veterans Care Center earlier in the week and he expressed concern about the closing of the canteen. Mr. Snelling said that the vending machines that were installed to replace the canteen eliminate the social interaction, and that the quality of the items in the machines is very poor. Commissioner Mangis responded that the canteen was closed because of accounting problems and theft, but that the canteen could be reopened if veterans groups in the Roanoke Valley step forward and agree to operate the canteen, preferably on a collaborative basis. Mr. Mangis said that the American Legion Post 137 in Richmond has already agreed to staff the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center canteen, once the facility is open. Pat Green promised to bring the VVCC canteen issue to the attention of the Roanoke Valley Veterans Council at its next meeting and report back to the Council. He said he personally would see that this issue is resolved and conduct fundraisers to support the project if necessary.

Mr. Green also reported that he has confirmed the availability of land that could be donated for construction of a veterans cemetery in Southwest Virginia.

Everyone agreed that the JLC 2006 legislative agenda should be developed soon, so that the member VSOs may consider ratifying the JLC’s agenda at upcoming state conventions.

It was suggested that the idea of providing tax credits to employers whose employees are deployed overseas be considered as an advocacy issue at the state and federal level.

Mr. Schneider suggested that the congressional committee booklet on state veterans programs be updated and republished to provide information on benefits offered in different states. A question was raised as to whether VSOs are still required to register in each state.

Mr. O’Neill asked Mr. Combs for an update on the activities of the Veterans Service Foundation. Mr. Combs said that the Foundation’s organizational logistics are nearly complete and that it will file for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status with the IRS. Mr. Combs said that the Foundation’s Trustees soon will finalize a mechanism for recognizing donors and how funds are to be allocated. The Foundation has a good accounting system in place with sub-accounts for restricted, unrestricted, and specific use funds. The next step is to organize and conduct a fund-raising campaign.

Mr. O’Neill asked Dr. Dumas if he would be willing to make a presentation at the next JLC meeting on homeless veterans and what the JLC can do to help them. Dr. Dumas agreed to do so. Mr. Jasper said Dr. Dumas might want to consult with Leon Fields at the Salem VA Medical Center who facilitates a homeless veterans program there.

Dr. Dumas distributed a copy of a letter he had received from his state representative, Delegate Stephen Shannon, thanking him for his service on the Council and offering his assistance in support of JLC objectives during the General Assembly session. Dr. Dumas said the letter underscores the impact that veterans can have on legislative actions and policy decisions if they work together to achieve common goals. Dr. Dumas encouraged Council members to advocate for veterans issues with their state representatives at the district level.

Mr. Ellis encouraged JLC member organizations to sponsor parades and other events in their communities to show support for veterans returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Everyone liked the idea of having a roundtable discussion at the end of each meeting, and agreed it should be included as an agenda item in the future.

Public Comments

Mr. McAnaw said there is inconsistency from various sources that state the number of veterans residing in Virginia, and that this situation needs to be resolved if veterans are to reach their legislative objectives. Commissioner Mangis responded that some reports use the number of veterans reported on the 2000 Census, while other reports use more recent USDVA estimates.

Anne McKinney spoke in support of the idea of a JLC “Day on the Hill.” Ms. McKinney also reported on a wounded veterans project known as “Fisher House.” The Fisher House project provides a place for the families of wounded veterans to stay while their loved ones are recovering from their injuries in military hospitals. Some of the housing is located in separate buildings adjacent to the medical facilities and some is on dedicated floors of the hospital itself. These facilities and units cost about \$1 – 2 million to construct, 50% of which must come from private donors. Ms. McKinney asked the Council members for their assistance with this initiative by requesting donations from their VSOs. The Paralyzed Veterans of America, which is spearheading this project, has sent letters to local VSO posts, and Ms. McKinney said she would forward a copy of the letter to Mr. Combs for distribution to the JLC.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the JLC was scheduled for May 11, 2005, at 11:00 a.m. It was agreed that the meeting would be held some where in the Hampton Roads area, with the location to be selected by the Commissioner’s Office.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:30 p.m.

Minutes of the May 11, 2005 Meeting

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Wednesday, May 11, 2005, in the National Chaplain Center Conference Room at the Hampton VA Medical Center, Hampton, Virginia.

Members Present

Jim Aucoin, *American Veterans*; John Bonnell, *Marine Corps League*; Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*; George Dumas, *Homeless and Disabled Veterans*; Pat Green, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; John Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*; Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*; James Jones, *Korean War Veterans Association*; Jon Mangis, *Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services*; Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*; Connie O'Neill, *American Legion*; Richard Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; Peter Snelling, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*; and Sam Wilder, *Association of the United States Army*.

Members Absent

John Anderson, *Chairman, Board of Veterans Services*; John Dunleavy, *Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge*; David Ellis, *NAUS*; Paul Fink, *U. S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association*; Robert Gray, *American Ex-Prisoners of War*; Michael Hulsey, *Reserve Officers Association of the U.S.*; R. Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*; Ronald Shamblin, *Virginia National Guard Association*; Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*; Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*; and Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*. Mr. Wickersham was absent because he is serving in Kuwait and Iraq as a Department of Defense support contractor on an urgent armoring project for fuel tankers.

Others Present

Laura Alexander, *American Legion, Second District*; John Anderson, *Manager, Hampton Field Office, Virginia Department of Veterans Services*; Bert Boyd, *Chief Deputy Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services*; Steven Combs, *Assistant to the Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services*; Rhonda Earman, *Administrative Supervisor, Virginia Department of Veterans Services*; Fred Fralin, *Benefit Services Administrator, Virginia Department of Veterans Services*; Don Ferguson, *Office of the Attorney General*; Paul Hamaker, *representing NAUS on behalf of David Ellis*; Don Kaiserman, *representing MOAA on behalf of Frank Wickersham*; Larry Mattera, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*; Roger Messier; C. P. Powell, *American Legion Post 25*; Gerald Rhoads, *American Legion Post 25*; Allen Wilson, *Homeless and Disabled Veterans*; and Channing Zucker, *representing the U.S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association on behalf of Paul Fink*.

Materials Distributed

Meeting Agenda; draft Minutes of the February 23, 2005, meeting; JLC Constitution and Bylaws; Draft JLC 2006 Legislative Agenda; VCOC-MOAA State Legislative Objectives; AUSA Proposed State Legislative Goals; "The Case for In-State Tuition" and

states' comparison/Virginia summary of in-state tuition from U. S. Army web site; Homeless Veterans graphics presentation; Homeless and Disabled Veterans' press package for Veterans Annual Telethon; Draft Resolution – Jane Fonda; “Jane Fonda in Wonderland – Non-apology Not Accepted,” Lehtinen, D., National Review Online, April 29, 2005; Commissioner's Update graphics presentation; list of JLC member organizations' web site addresses; “Surviving Paperwork War – Getting Compensation for War-related Injuries is a Bureaucratic Nightmare that Drives Veterans to the Edge with ‘Claims Anxiety’,” Bull, J., Hampton Roads Daily Press, April 17, 2005; “A Final Honor – Service Member's Dream Provides Final Resting Spot for Veterans,” Sorlie, D., Soundings Online, May 4, 2005; flyers for the remaining 2005 Supermarkets of Veterans Benefits; and JLC Membership Roster.

Call to Order

With 12 of 23 voting members present, Chairman O'Neill called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. Mr. Jackson arrived shortly after the meeting began, for a total of 13 of 23 voting members present.

Approval of Minutes

A **motion** was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2005 meeting, as drafted.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

Homeless and Disabled Veterans Presentation

George Dumas began his presentation by saying that Leon Fields, the Chairman of Homeless Veterans Program, Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Virginia, was ill and could not attend the meeting as planned. Dr. Dumas said the Homeless and Disabled Veterans organization is supported entirely through the efforts of dedicated volunteers.

Dr. Dumas introduced Homeless and Disabled Veterans National Chairman Allen Wilson. Mr. Wilson provided a video presentation on the Veterans Annual Telethon, which Homeless and Disabled Veterans hopes to air on Veterans Day, November 11, 2005, on independent television stations across the country. Mr. Wilson asked the JLC members for their organizations' support of the telethon through monetary donations, volunteer help and publicity of the telecast. Mr. Wilson noted that, because Homeless and Disabled Veterans is a 501(c)(3) organization, all donations for the telecast are tax-exempt. Mr. Snelling emphasized the importance of Homeless and Disabled Veterans providing verification to prospective donors of the tax-exempt status.

Discussion followed about the homeless and disabled veterans programs. Mr. Rinaldo asked whether only those veterans with cognitive, emotional or substance abuse problems qualified for homeless and disabled programs. Mr. Snelling said the VFW has a formal mechanism for evaluating eligibility for its homeless and disabled veterans programs, with the primary criteria being a willingness for the veterans to help themselves. Mr. Snelling added that most of the veterans participating in the programs do have mental or substance abuse problems. Mr. Green said the Roanoke Valley Homeless and Disabled

Veterans Program is funded entirely through private donations. Mr. O'Neill suggested that this discussion be continued at future JLC meetings.

Report of the Ad Hoc Sub-Committee on State Veterans' Benefits

Mr. Rinaldo stated that the sub-committee had provided its report at the last JLC meeting. Commissioner Mangis added that the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs has information on its web site about the various veterans benefits offered by each state. Mr. Mangis promised to send a summary of that information to the JLC members following the meeting. Mr. O'Neill said this information could be used as a advocacy tool with federal and state law and policy makers.

Mr. Mangis said that the common thread among all states is veterans benefits services and that 49 of 50 states have care centers, with Alaska hoping to add a care center in the future. Commissioner Mangis emphasized the importance of benefits services outreach by locating service offices near population centers and augmenting that outreach with itinerant service points.

In-State Tuition Report

Sam Wilder began his report by saying that three years ago, the U. S. Army found that eligibility for in-state tuition rates for soldiers and family members was inconsistent across the 50 states. The Army set a desired outcome that the states' in-state tuition programs should be consistent, based on three criteria:

1. For service and family members within their state of legal residence;
2. For service and family members while in the state of assignment; and
3. Continuity of in-state tuition once established

Mr. Wilder then compared the Army's desired consistency outcomes with the status of Virginia's in-state tuition programs:

1. *Eligibility in state of legal residence* – military personnel and their spouse/dependents remain eligible for in-state tuition benefits as long as Virginia remains their home of record.
2. *Eligibility in state of assignment* – upon arrival in the state of Virginia on military orders, spouses/dependents are eligible to receive the in-state tuition benefit for one year.
3. *Continuity of in-state eligibility once established* – the in-state tuition benefit continues only if the non-military spouse establishes residence and earns at least \$10,800 within the first year of assignment in Virginia.

Mr. Wilder noted that Virginia currently meets only the first desired outcome, while the states contiguous to Virginia – Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia – meet all three. Mr. Wilder said that, currently, eligibility is based on whether the service member and/or his family pay taxes in Virginia. Mr. Wilder also said Delegate Baskerville introduced a bill during the 2005 General Assembly session (HB 2567) that would have provided in-state tuition for all military personnel on active duty

for more than 30 days living in Virginia and assigned to a permanent duty station. Mr. Wilder said that bill was stricken by the patron, and that another, similar bill was left in committee. Mr. Wilder noted that there seems to be a reluctance, generally, by the General Assembly to grant in-state tuition rates unless the service member pays Virginia taxes. Mr. Wilder stated, however, that Senator Walter Stosch's proposal, that service members enrolled in the Virginia Community College System for at least two years be allowed to transfer to a four-year institution and receive in-state tuition, is a step in the right direction.

Mr. O'Neill asked if the state would absorb the difference in the in-state and out-of-state rates. Mr. Wilder responded that the governing boards of individual institutions have some latitude in that decision and that some Virginia schools have reciprocal tuition agreements with institutions outside Virginia. Mr. Ferguson noted that each state institution receives an appropriation from the General Assembly and that it is up to the schools to fill any funding gaps. Mr. Wilder suggested that a portion of the state's revenue surplus might be used to fill this need. Mr. Ferguson emphasized that the term "revenue surplus" is a relative, saying that his understanding is that this money has been allocated to replenish the Commonwealth's Rainy Day Fund. Mr. Ferguson said that even with that allocation, the Rainy Day Fund still would not be at the desired level. Mr. Ferguson added that the surplus might also be used to shore up K-12 education funding, which has been diminished in recent years by state budget shortfalls.

Mr. Rinaldo said he thought the number of service members taking advantage of an in-state tuition program would be minimal and recommended that a cost analysis be done. Mr. Rinaldo emphasized that if the cost is low and funding can be found for the program, it would provide a substantial public relations benefit for Virginia. Commissioner Mangis supported this idea, saying that Commonwealth wants to attract military retirees.

A **motion** was made, seconded, and passed with Mr. Botts dissenting, that the JLC include in its 2006 legislative agenda the objective of Virginia meeting two of the three desired outcomes outlined by Mr. Wilder. Mr. Botts said he believes it is unreasonable for anyone to expect such a benefit without paying Virginia taxes.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Mangis began his report by thanking the staff of the Hampton VA Medical Center for allowing the JLC to use its facilities for the meeting.

Commissioner Mangis then briefed the Council on the DVS budget amendments passed during the 2005 General Assembly Session.

The Governor's initial proposal, based on the Department of Planning and Budget's recommendations, was for an additional \$630,000, which included a \$47,000 maintenance reserve and filling of all currently authorized Full-Time Employee (FTE) positions. Delegate Cox patroned a budget amendment for an additional \$276,000, which included hiring six new veterans service representatives (VSRs), over and above the Governor's proposal. Delegate Cox's budget amendment as passed was in the amount of \$300,000. Another budget amendment patroned by Senator Edwards provides funding to

support a study on the need for a third veterans care center in the Hampton Roads area. Commissioner Mangis added that the Hampton VA Medical Center is receptive to the idea of a care center being located adjacent to it.

Commissioner Mangis said that because no training and travel funds were allocated during the regular General Assembly session for the additional VSR positions, Governor Warner included an additional \$124,000 for this purpose during the reconvened session.

Commissioner Mangis emphasized the importance of adequately supporting the current field staff with sufficient training and equipment before adding new field offices.

Commissioner Mangis noted that in 2004 the Commonwealth received approximately \$1.8 billion in revenues generated from VA programs, and of that amount, approximately \$800 million was in the form of direct benefit payments. In Federal FY2002, an additional \$3.5 billion was paid to military retirees residing in the Commonwealth. This was mentioned to show the economic impact that veterans have on the Commonwealth.

Commissioner Mangis said DVS already has begun working with the Board of Veterans Services to develop a strategic plan for the 2006-2008 biennial budget.

Commissioner Mangis emphasized the importance of communicating benefits information to veterans and said the Supermarkets of Veterans Benefits will help achieve this goal. Mr. Mangis said that in addition to the Supermarket that was held on April 21 in South Boston, three more are scheduled for this year, and he asked for the support of JLC member organizations in getting the word out.

Mr. Mangis said it also is important for the VSOs to coordinate their activities with DVS initiatives like the Supermarkets, in order to avoid duplication of effort and so that the Supermarket events will attract more attendees. Commissioner Mangis pointed out that the MOPH sent one of their service officers to South Boston on the Saturday prior to the Supermarket event to help veterans file disability claims. While commending MOPH's efforts to serve veterans, he pointed out that, unfortunately, this action may have resulted in low attendance at the Supermarket, as veterans who sought assistance from MOPH on Saturday may not have felt the need to attend the Supermarket the following Thursday.

Commissioner Mangis said that while the veterans that attended the MOPH event may have received some assistance on disability claims, they missed the opportunity to speak with experts from 16 state and federal agencies that offer services to veterans and that may have been able to help them. Commissioner Mangis noted the organizations that participated in the South Boston Supermarket, including the Department of Veterans Services (Benefits, Cemeteries, and Education) Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Rehabilitative Services, the Department of Social Services, the Virginia Housing Development Authority, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (Benefits, Homeless Veterans, Home Loan, and Voc/Rehab), the McGuire VA Medical Center, the Social Security Administration, the TriCare Regional Office, the U.S. Small Business

Administration, Virginia Troops to Teachers, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Commissioner Mangis reported that he had attended a ceremony at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery on May 5 honoring the donation of a Blue Star Memorial Byway Marker by the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. Mr. Mangis said similar memorials may be placed at the Virginia Veterans Care Center and the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in the future.

Commissioner Mangis then introduced DVS Benefits Administrator Fred Fralin, who provided an update on recent and planned hirings of additional VSRs. Mr. Fralin said that VSR positions in the Big Stone Gap, Charlottesville, Wytheville and Lynchburg offices and been filled and that a veterans service administrator (VSA) position had been filled in the Cedar Bluff office. Mr. Fralin said that the vacant VSR positions in the Richmond and Tidewater offices would be filled shortly after July 1, and that the part-time VSR positions in the Accomac and Front Royal offices will become full-time after July 1. Mr. Fralin added that the part-time VSA positions in the Charlottesville, Front Royal, Quantico, Richmond, and Tidewater offices would also become full-time positions after July 1. In addition, Mr. Fralin reported that six new VSRs would be hired after July 1, and will staff new offices in the Danville, Northern Virginia, Richmond, and Tidewater areas. Mr. Fralin said that hiring preference is given to veterans if candidates are equally qualified. Mr. Fralin also said DVS is trying to secure office space near VA Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) locations in the Alexandria/Pentagon and Portsmouth areas.

Mr. Fralin reported that all new VSRs will be trained by experienced VSRs and that a technical reference manual has been developed by DVS Regional Benefits Manager Sam Brown for this purpose. Mr. Fralin reported that all new VSRs would be tested in phases on what they have learned and how well they apply their knowledge on the job.

Mr. Mangis then introduced John Anderson, manager of the DVS Hampton field office. Mr. Anderson briefed the Council on the Hampton field office's staffing levels and service areas. Mr. Anderson stated that his office was the department's second busiest in Fiscal Year 2004 and that service volume is on track to be even higher this year.

Dr. Dumas praised the DVS web site content and suggested that veterans statistics be added to it.

New Business

Chairman O'Neill then opened the floor for discussion on the draft 2006 JLC Legislative Agenda.

Item 1, Third Veterans Care Center – Commissioner Mangis said that DVS needed to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a third Care Center study in the near future. He noted that the department needs to have a study provider by July 1, 2005. Everyone agreed that a dollar figure for the estimated design/construction costs needs to be

included with this item, and Commissioner Mangis agreed to provide that information at the next meeting.

Item 2, Third State Veterans Cemetery – Pat Green reported that the effort to acquire a specific piece of donated land to construct a third veterans cemetery in Southwest Virginia is on hold, because of some technical difficulties that may exist with the site. Mr. Green said that other donors are being considered, including the Virginia Department of Transportation and Virginia Tech. Commissioner Mangis noted that approval of the site and securing of VA grant funding is a multi-year process, but that the VA is receptive to the prospect of a third veterans cemetery in Virginia. A **motion** was made by Pat Green, seconded by Dan Miller and passed unanimously to include this item in the legislative agenda, contingent upon receiving donated land in Fiscal Year 2007 and the provision of design funds in Fiscal Year 2008.

Item 3, Travel Reimbursement for JLC Members – There was discussion on how best to approach this item, whether through a statutory change, eliminating the provision that members will not be reimbursed, or by adding a reimbursement amount in the budget bill during the General Assembly session. Mr. Ferguson noted that the budget bill would trump the statutory change. Mr. Rinaldo suggested changing the statute to ensure reimbursement.

Item 4, Quorum Requirements at JLC Meetings – there was discussion on the various options for achieving a sufficient number of voting members at the meetings to conduct Council business. Mr. Green made a **motion**, which was seconded by Mr. Miller, that JLC member organizations appoint alternates, or proxies, that have the authority to vote if the gubernatorial appointee is not present, and that if travel expense reimbursement becomes available, only one member would be eligible for reimbursement. Mr. Ferguson advised that reducing the number required to achieve a quorum in the statute would be a simpler than the proxy option. Mr. Ferguson also said it was within the discretion of the JLC to reduce the number of “qualified VSOs” represented on the Council. It was noted that meeting attendance records are submitted to the Secretary of the Commonwealth annually, and that it is within the discretion of the Governor to remove members who do not attend regularly.

It was agreed that the best approach to improve attendance would be to contact those members directly who have missed several meetings and, therefore, Pat Green rescinded his earlier motion. A **motion** was made by Mason Botts, seconded by Pat Green and passed unanimously to remove this item from the legislative agenda and that members with poor attendance be contacted directly by one of their peers on the Council before contacting their member organization or requesting that the Secretary of Commonwealth take action to remove them. Pat Green and Mason Botts agreed to telephone the members with poor attendance.

Item 5, New Education Wing for Virginia War Memorial – a **motion** was made by Pat Green, seconded by Dan Miller and passed unanimously to delete this item from the legislative agenda because design funds (contingent upon matching funds) were provided in the Governor’s budget. This item was now considered closed.

Item 6, Security for Virginia War Memorial – it was agreed that Commissioner Mangis would prepare a letter for Chairman O’Neill’s signature to be sent to the Speaker of the House of Delegates requesting on-site security for the Memorial, and that the Speaker’s response would dictate whether this item would remain on the legislative agenda.

Items 7 and 8, Unique Medals for Virginia Service Men and Women Serving in Iraq and for Women Cited of Heroism – it was agreed that since the Adjutant General is addressing these issues, there is no need to include them as JLC legislative agenda items.

New Item 8 – Everyone agreed that In-State Tuition should be added to the legislative agenda, with the goal of achieving two of the three desired outcomes outlined by Mr. Wilder earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Wilder suggested prioritizing the agenda items, and Mr. Bonnell proposed making in-state tuition a high priority.

Chairman O’Neill then read from VCOC-MOAA’s list of legislative priorities, which includes an increase in state funding for National Guard recruiting, bonuses and health care. Strengthening the Guard and Reserves also is a legislative goal for the AUSA. Chairman O’Neill asked Messrs. Wilder and Kaiserman to draft a statement on strengthening the Guard and Reserve to be considered by the JLC at its next meeting for inclusion in its 2006 legislative agenda.

Mr. O’Neill then opened the floor for discussion on a proposed General Assembly resolution declaring Jane Fonda a *persona non grata* in the Commonwealth. Although all personally agreed with the thrust of the resolution, all but one Council member agreed that it would not be in the best interests of the JLC and its member organizations to endorse such a resolution.

Mr. O’Neill then opened the floor for nominations for JLC Chairman and Vice Chairman for the coming year. George Dumas, Pat Green, Frank Wickersham, and Mason Botts were nominated to serve as Chairman. George Dumas, Pat Green, and Sam Wilder were nominated to serve as Vice Chairman. It was agreed that elections would be of individual candidates not candidate slates. Chairman O’Neill said voting would take place at the next meeting.

Public Comments

Larry Mattera emphasized the importance of regular attendance by JLC members at Council meetings and said that state commanders of member organizations can be instrumental in helping the JLC achieve this goal. Mr. Mattera also reported that the Military Order of the Purple Heart recently had placed benches at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Jasper reported on the ROTC-JROTC leadership awards that recently had been given by the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Commissioner Mangis added that he expects the property transfer issues for the Richmond Care Center to be resolved soon. Mr. Mangis said DVS also is in the process of reviewing bids for the construction project.

Steven Combs announced that a ceremony marking the 60th Anniversary of the VA's Chaplain Service would be held on May 23 at the Hampton VA Medical Center and that the JLC members had been invited to attend.

Paul Hamaker reported on Congressional measures to redefine the meaning of the term "veteran," an effort which may exclude some veterans from receiving certain VA benefits, especially health care benefits. Mr. Hamaker urged the JLC to advocate against such measures. Commissioner Mangis responded that the JLC primarily is concerned with state legislative initiatives, but that as a veteran himself, he is concerned about the Bush Administration's budget proposals limiting veterans benefits. Dr. Dumas thanked Mr. Hamaker for his comments and emphasized the importance of the VSOs working at the federal and state level to ensure that veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

Mr. O'Neill stated that this would be his last full meeting as Chairman and thanked everyone for their support during his tenure.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the JLC was scheduled for July 13 at 11 a.m., at the American Legion Department of Virginia in Richmond, subject to availability of the facility.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:50 p.m.

Minutes of the July 13, 2005 Meeting

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on July 13, 2005, at the Times-Dispatch Hanover Production Facility in Mechanicsville, Virginia.

Members Present

Jim Aucoin, *AMVETS*; John Bonnell, *Marine Corps League*; Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*; David Ellis, *NAUS*; Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*; Robert Gray, *American Ex-Prisoners of War*; Jon Mangis, *Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services*; Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*; Connie O'Neill, *American Legion*; Richard Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; R. Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*; Peter Snelling, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*; Tom Stephen, *Reserve Officers Association*; Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*; and Sam Wilder, *Association of the United States Army*.

Members Absent

John Anderson, *Chairman, Board of Veterans Services*; George Dumas, *Homeless and Disabled Veterans*; John Dunleavy, *Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge*; Paul Fink, *U. S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association*; Pat Green, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; John Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*; James Jones, *Korean War Veterans Association*; Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*; and Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*.

Others Present

Steven Combs, Assistant to the Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; Sarah Costa, 1ST Junior Vice Commander, Department of Virginia, Disabled American Veterans; Rhonda Earman, Administrative Supervisor, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; Don Ferguson, Office of the Attorney General; Jon Hatfield, Executive Director, Virginia War Memorial; Admiral John Heckman, Chairman, Virginia War Memorial Educational Foundation; Don Kaiserman, Richmond Area Chapter of MOAA.

Materials Distributed

Meeting Agenda; draft Minutes of the May 11, 2005, meeting; draft version 2 of the JLC 2006 Legislative Agenda; Summary of Military Tuition Waivers contained in HB 1500, 2005 General Assembly Budget Bill; July 6, 2005 letter from Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Virginia (VFW) to Governor Warner and accompanying Resolutions V-2, V-3, V-6, V-7, V-9, V-12, V-13 and Secretary of Administration's letter response; VFW Legislative Goals; Military Order of the Purple Heart Department of Virginia's Resolutions with respect to Placement of New Claims Agents in VA Medical Centers and the Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC), and State Income Tax Check-Off for Veterans; Marine Corps League Legislative Proposal with respect to No-Cost Vehicle Registration for Virginia Veterans; Disabled American Veterans Department of Virginia Resolution in Support of a National Fisher House at the McGuire VA Medical Center;

draft Resolution of the JLC to Strengthen Virginia's National Guard and Reserve and Background Information submitted jointly by the Association of the U. S. Army and the Military Officers Association of America; SJ 35 and SJ 125 from the 2000 session of the Virginia General Assembly; e-mail message from the American War Library on what to do with found dog tags; and Virginia War Memorial publications "Virginians at War," and "Foundation Facts."

Call to Order

With 14 of 22 voting members present, Chairman O'Neill called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

A **motion** was made by Dan Miller, seconded by Norman Jasper, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the May 11, 2005 meeting, as drafted.

Unfinished Business

Chairman O'Neill announced that Board of Veterans Services member Mel Drisko had passed away recently and honored him for his service in support veterans and the Department of Veterans Services (DVS). Mr. Aucoin announced that the past AMVETS state commander, Butch Garner, also passed away recently.

Mr. O'Neill welcomed back Frank Wickersham, who had just returned from assignment in Iraq.

Chairman O'Neill said he had presented the draft version 2 of the JLC 2006 Legislative Agenda to the Board of Veterans Services at its July 11 meeting, and that it had been accepted by the Board. Mr. O'Neill reported that the Governor's Chief of Staff was now a Board member and that he had provided insight on the Governor's actions in support of in-state tuition for service men and women and their families. Mr. O'Neill asked Steven Combs to provide the Council with an overview of the Governor's proposal. Mr. Combs explained that the Commonwealth has allocated funds to cover the difference in the cost of in-state, versus out-of-state tuition, for service men and women and their families at Virginia's colleges and universities for the first year that they reside in Virginia, allowing the families time to establish Virginia residency. Sam Wilder said this information is nothing new from what he had reported at the last JLC meeting and that the one-year provision does not meet two of the Army's three desired outcomes, i.e., eligibility in state of assignment; and continuity of in-state eligibility once established. Mr. Wilder added that currently, Virginia requires that a non-military spouse of a service man or woman must be working and paying federal and state income taxes.

Mr. Wilder noted that the five states contiguous to Virginia – Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia – and all but six nationwide, meet all three of the Army's desired outcomes. Mr. Wilder emphasized that the goal should be that as long as a military family is stationed in Virginia, the entire family should be eligible for in-state tuition. Mr. Rinaldo said that the JLC should make reference to the positive impact VA benefits have on the Virginia economy when advocating for in-state tuition with law and policy makers.

Commissioner Mangis asked Mr. Wilder if he knew what the cost of an in-state tuition program covering military members and their families while they are stationed in Virginia would be. Mr. Wilder responded that he did not have a figure, but believed the cost would be minimal.

Mr. Combs called attention to SJ 35 and SJ 125 from the 2000 General Assembly session. Mr. Combs said the resolutions were distributed at the request of Paul Hamaker, who attended the May 11, 2005 JLC meeting on behalf of David Ellis. SJ 35 memorializes Congress to enact the Keep Our Promise to America's Retirees Act; and SJ 125 memorializes Congress to restore quality health care to active duty and retired military personnel and their families.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Mangis welcomed new member Tom Stephen and thanked him for his help in securing the Times-Dispatch Hanover Production Facility for the meeting.

Commissioner Mangis said DVS has been busy filling the Veterans Service Representative (VSR) positions funded during the 2005 General Assembly session. Mr. Mangis said Governor Warner's budget proposal passed by the General Assembly allowed for filling all vacant VSR positions, and that a bill patroned by Board of Veterans Services member Kirk Cox provided for six new VSR positions. Commissioner Mangis said that a one-week training session for new VSRs had already taken place, and that a second session for new VSRs would take place this week. Mr. Mangis noted that seven of the nine newly hired VSRs were veterans and that the two non-veterans had worked in veterans claims offices.

Commissioner Mangis reported that DVS is trying to get space in the Northern Virginia area to place a VSR, and that Board of Veterans Services members Hershel Gober and Delegate Vivian Watts were assisting with that effort. Mr. Mangis said the possibility of co-locating DVS offices with other state agencies across the state is being explored, as well as the possibility of collaborating with them to enhance service delivery to the veterans community. Commissioner Mangis also said he has communicated with the director of the McGuire VA Medical Center with the request for no-cost office space and equipment to place a VSR in the main building of that facility.

Commissioner Mangis reported that the Supermarket of Veterans Benefits in Norton was successful with 27 federal, state and local vendors participating and over 100 veterans in attendance. Commissioner Mangis said the turnout at the Supermarkets has been sporadic and that their efficacy will be evaluated after the last one scheduled for October has taken place. Mr. Mangis noted that Supermarkets held in conjunction with other events like job fairs get the best turnout.

Commissioner Mangis said that legislation enacted by the 2004 General Assembly mandated the establishment of a Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee (VCCAC). Commissioner Mangis reported that the VCCAC is made up of professionals from the long-term care and geriatric fields and that the first meeting of the committee had taken

place on June 24 at the VVCC. Commissioner Mangis said the wealth of knowledge that members of the VCCAC have will be beneficial in making recommendations for the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center.

Commissioner Mangis said that Governor Warner recently had signed the decision brief authorizing the expenditure for the construction of the new storage building at the VVCC. Other renovations to be done at the care center include construction of a new laundry facility for residents' use and items like new carpeting throughout the facility.

Commissioner Mangis said the deed to transfer the property from the VA to the Commonwealth for the construction of the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center has been submitted to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and is awaiting his signature. Mr. Mangis noted that construction will begin as soon as the deed is fully executed.

Commissioner Mangis reported that Memorial Day ceremonies were conducted at both state veterans cemeteries and that repair of storm damage at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery will begin soon. Mr. Mangis said that the demand at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery has created a need for a second committal shelter and that DVS will include that project in its long-range budget planning. Commissioner Mangis reported that there have been 255 burials at the Horton Cemetery since it began operations in December 2004, as compared to 188 burials at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery for the 12-month period ending June 30, 2005. Commissioner Mangis said that DVS is preparing a plan to market the Amelia facility.

Commissioner Mangis said that Tom Clemons had been hired as the new Director of the State Approving Agency (SAA) for Veterans Education. Commissioner Mangis noted that Mr. Clemons is an astute individual, who recently retired from the U. S. Air Force. Mr. Mangis advised that the SAA approves programs of study for veterans at post-secondary institutions.

Commissioner Mangis reported that a recent audit by the Auditor of Public Accounts found no single instance of non-compliance with state accounting procedures, but that taken together, the small instances of non-compliance added up to a material weakness with the internal controls of the agency. Mr. Mangis said DVS has contracted with an individual to evaluate the internal controls and develop fiscal policies and procedures to remedy the situation. Mr. Mangis also said that a Chief Fiscal Officer soon will be hired to manage the fiscal operations of the agency, with all DVS fiscal management eventually being located in Richmond.

Commissioner Mangis reported that Mr. Combs had been working with the various service areas to develop the agency's Strategic Plan, which will be used as a budget-development mechanism. Mr. Mangis said that the Board of Veterans Services' Strategic Planning Sub-committee will provide input into the Plan.

Commissioner Mangis said that DVS also has developed a 6-year Capital Construction Plan that includes long-range goals for the following biennial budgets:

- 2006-08 – Moveable equipment for the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center – this was necessary because the funds previously allocated for the equipment had to be used to cover construction cost inflation;
- 2008-10 – Restoration of the 80 domiciliary beds at the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center, cut because of construction cost inflation and changing health care delivery standards;
- 2008-10 – Construction of a third cemetery in Southwest Virginia – DVS already has filed a pre-application with the USDVA for this project; and
- 2010-12 – Possible third care center in the Hampton Roads area – the feasibility study conducted earlier on the need for a care center in Richmond also recommended a care center in this region, and a budget amendment passed during the 2005 legislative session provided \$50,000 to study the need for a third care center.

Commissioner Mangis said that it takes five to seven years to obtain VA funding for care centers.

Commissioner Mangis also said that JLC member Pat Green had received an offer of donated land for a third cemetery in Southwest Virginia, but because the site was located in close proximity to a munitions plant, the project is temporarily on hold.

Commissioner Mangis said that the addition of the Governor's Chief of Staff to the Board of Veterans Services will provide better access to the Governor's office. Commissioner Mangis noted that Mr. Leighty is a veteran and grew up in a career military family.

Unfinished Business, cont.

Chairman O'Neill said he was concerned that, although the Board of Veterans Services approved the JLC Legislative Agenda, he believes the Board may not take any action on it. Commissioner Mangis responded that DVS will make the legislative Board members aware of the items in the agenda, and that advocacy by the JLC and its member organizations before and during the General Assembly session will help promote the legislative objectives. Commissioner Mangis also said that the objectives relating to a third cemetery and a third care center are addressed in the DVS capital construction plan, and that DVS will request that legislation be introduced for a statutory change allowing for reimbursement of travel expenditures for JLC members.

Discussion then turned to additional items to be included in the Legislative Agenda. The first item was a request from the Disabled American Veterans Department of Virginia (DAV) to support its resolution for a second National Fisher House in Virginia, located at the McGuire VA Medical Center (VAMC). The Fisher House project provides housing and other support to families of wounded veterans and service members being treated at VAMCs. Dan Miller noted that a patient's healing and rehabilitation progress typically improves when they have family members nearby. Mr. Miller said that the total project cost is estimated at \$2 million, and that the DAV is seeking a \$1 million match from public and private donors.

Members of the JLC voiced their support for the resolution and endorsed the concept of building a Fisher House at the McGuire VAMC.

Chairman O'Neil stated that he would be attending the American Legion state convention in Roanoke the weekend of July 16th, and that he would be introducing the resolution at that time.

Chairman O'Neill called for a vote on whether to include this project as an item in the JLC Legislative Agenda, and there was unanimous agreement to do so. Mr. O'Neill suggested that the DAV resolution be redrafted as a JLC resolution, and Commissioner Mangis said DVS staff would take care of that task. A **motion** was made, seconded and passed unanimously to include support of the Fisher House as a Legislative Agenda item.

Pete Snelling then presented the VFW's Legislative Goals and called attention to Item 3 related to funding. With respect to the first funding item, Commissioner Mangis said DVS would request funding to support the hiring of additional VSRs sufficient to meet the needs of Virginia's veterans. Commissioner Mangis added that legislation passed by the 2005 General Assembly established a base number of VSRs that DVS cannot fall below, and which can be built on in the future. Mr. Mangis said that approximately \$900 million in total compensation and pension benefits comes into the Commonwealth each year and emphasized the importance of having enough VSRs to sustain or increase that level of revenue. Commissioner Mangis also said that DVS needs to have a strong administrative core to sufficient to support all of the agency's programs and services.

Mr. Snelling then called attention to Items 4 and 5, dealing with security and educational programs at the Virginia War Memorial, and Chairman O'Neill asked Jon Hatfield for his input. Mr. Hatfield said the *Virginians at War* initiative is an educational program designed for school children to preserve and teach history and instill patriotism at no cost to the school systems. The program includes film presentations on World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars, as well as printed materials and lesson plans tied to the Standards of Learning. Mr. Hatfield said many of the younger students know very little about war history, and that the War Memorial program helps teach them about the significance of veterans' contributions to our nation. Mr. Hatfield said the Memorial receives only a maintenance appropriation from the General Assembly, but nothing to support the costly educational programs. Mr. Hatfield added that the Memorial has received \$150,000 from the United States Department of Education for its educational programs, but that an additional \$150,000 is needed. Mr. Wilder asked if the Memorial receives private donations and Mr. Hatfield said yes, but that they are not sufficient to fund all of the programs. Mr. Wilder suggested that the Memorial apply for matching grant funding, and Admiral Heckman said that was a viable option. Mr. Hatfield urged the Council members to ask their respective VSOs to advocate with the Governor and General Assembly for state matching funds to support the Memorial's educational programs. Mr. Hatfield advised that of the \$4.3 million needed to construct the new Education Wing at the Memorial, \$1 million will come from the Memorial's Foundation fund.

Chairman O'Neill called for a **motion** that the Council include in its 2006 Legislative Agenda the following item in support of the War Memorial's educational programs:

- \$250,000 a year for the next five years to fund educational efforts; and
- \$4.3 million in funding for the construction of the new Education Wing.

The motion was made by Norman Jasper, seconded and passed unanimously.

Mr. Wilder then presented for consideration a draft resolution of the JLC to strengthen Virginia's National Guard and Reserve, which was prepared jointly by the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) and the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). Mr. Wilder said he had met with the leadership of the Virginia National Guard and the Reserve and emphasized the vital role these service men and women are playing in the Iraq war, adding that National Guard troops are training the Iraqi army. Mr. Wilder noted that he had spoken with Board of Veterans Services member Delegate Kirk Cox, who had provided advice on how AUSA and MOAA should proceed with their efforts to strengthen the Guard and Reserve, including asking the Governor to include funding for this initiative in his next budget proposal. Mr. Wilder added that Governor Warner is very concerned about this issue and has stated that he wants his administration to be known for supporting veterans and their families. Mr. Wilder said that Governor Warner recognizes that Virginia has the greatest veterans population per capita than any other state, and that he wants to hear from veterans about their issues and concerns. Mr. Wilder suggested that a delegation from the JLC meet with the Governor on the issue of strengthening the Guard and Reserve. Chairman O'Neill raised the issue of whether Guard and Reserves are considered veterans. Mr. Wilder responded that all of the VSOs are concerned about the Guard and Reserve issue, as is Governor Warner. Don Kaiserman added that the active duty military is up against the wall fighting the war on terror, and the Guard and Reserve has been instrumental in providing the vital support it needs. Mr. Wilder said that the VSOs and the JLC should take the lead to resolve this problem and not look at it simply as a veterans issue.

Mr. Rinaldo said he objects to the degree to which the Guard and Reserve have been called upon to fight the war on terror, adding that these troops should be used primarily for homeland security within the continental borders of the United States. Mr. Rinaldo said that including this issue as an item in the JLC's Legislative Agenda would only endorse the Bush Administration's practice of deploying the Guard and Reserve overseas. Mr. Ellis responded that the Guard and Reserve have always been an active component in the defense of the United States and should be treated the same as active duty military, adding that a veteran is a man in uniform who served. Mr. Stephen added that the Reserve Officers Association has made strengthening the Guard and Reserve one of its objectives for some time. Mr. Stephen said that employer conflict is the main reason these troops leave the Guard and Reserve, adding that employers often find a way around the provisions of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). Mr. Stephen also said that the Abrams Doctrine supports the involvement of the Guard and Reserve in combat situations, regardless of where the fighting occurs.

Mr. Miller said that supporting this issue might place the JLC in a position that it was not intended for, but added that if members of the Guard and Reserve are called into active

duty, they should be considered veterans. Mr. Miller also said he believes that USERRA is an issue to be addressed by the Department of Labor (DOL), not the Department of Defense (DOD). Mr. Stephen responded that the DOD resolves about 96% of USERRA conflicts, with the DOL handling the remaining 4%.

Mr. Wickersham said that the amount of funding needed to support this initiative must be established if the JLC is going to make a cogent case for it with the Governor and General Assembly. Mr. Wickersham questioned whether the bulleted items of the resolution are the Commonwealth's responsibility. Mr. Stephen responded that asking states to support the Guard and Reserve will create a stakeholder interest, which will benefit all veterans.

Chairman O'Neill said he had consulted with Mr. Ferguson on this matter and was advised that there are no legal restrictions on what issues the JLC addresses or supports. Mr. O'Neill asked if raising this issue in a letter to Governor Warner might be more appropriate than a Legislative Agenda item. Mr. Wilder responded that the Governor and General Assembly are responsible for the welfare of all Virginians and said he would like to present the issue in a face-to-face meeting with the Governor. Chairman O'Neill suggested that the resolution be the basis for communicating with the Governor in a letter, as well as a face-to-face meeting before his budget proposal is formulated, at the Governor's earliest convenience, but no later than some time in August. Mr. Ferguson advised that the JLC is supposed to make recommendations to the Board of Veterans Services or Commissioner, who act as intermediaries between the Governor and General Assembly, and suggested that the JLC send a letter to the Commissioner instead. Mr. Wilder responded that members of the JLC are not prohibited from communicating directly with the Governor and added that Chief of Staff Bill Leighty has indicated he wants to hear from veterans. A **motion** was made by Mr. Wilder, seconded by Mr. Aucoin and passed unanimously that the resolution as written be sent with a letter to the Chairman of the Board of Veterans Services now, as a recommendation of the Joint Leadership Council, and that a meeting with the Governor be requested for no later than August 15. Commissioner Mangis agreed to draft the letter and send it and the resolution to the Board.

Mr. Wilder then presented for consideration a draft resolution dealing with tax relief for retirees and the military, wherein government and military retirees were not allowed to pay their health insurance premiums with pre-tax dollars. Discussion followed.

Mr. Jasper then presented for consideration a resolution from the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) supporting a state income tax check-off in the amount of \$1 per taxpayer to support the programs and services of the Department of Veterans Services. A **motion** was made, seconded and passed, with one abstention from Mr. Miller, to add the tax check-off to the JLC Legislative Agenda.

Mr. Jasper presented a second resolution from the MOPH supporting the placement of four of the six newly-authorized VSRs at the three VA Medical Centers in Virginia and at the VVCC. Mr. Jasper withdrew the resolution from consideration after Commissioner

Mangis advised that a decision already had been made regarding placement of the new VSRs.

John Bonnell then presented for consideration a legislative proposal from the Marine Corps League for No-Cost Vehicle Registration for Virginia Veterans. After discussion, a **motion** was made by Mason Botts, seconded by Goodwin Sacra and passed unanimously that the proposal be included as a Legislative Agenda item, simply as “No-cost vehicle registration for a single automobile or light truck, per veteran.”

Mr. Bonnell then called attention to the handout on what to do with found ID dog tags, and indicated it was for informational purposes only.

Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Chairman O’Neill recited that the nominations for Chairman and Vice Chairman made at the last JLC meeting:

Chairman – George Dumas, Mason Botts, Pat Green, and Frank Wickersham, but noted that Mr. Green had withdrawn his name for consideration; and

Vice Chairman – George Dumas, Pat Green, and Sam Wilder, with Mr. Green again withdrawing his name from consideration.

With twelve votes, Mr. Wickersham was elected as Chairman, with Mr. Dumas receiving no votes and Mr. Botts receiving one vote. Mr. Wilder was unanimously elected as Vice Chairman.

Roundtable Discussion

Mr. O’Neill thanked JLC members for their support during his tenure as Chairman, and he said he was proud of what the JLC had accomplished. Mr. O’Neill also thanked DVS staff for the tremendous support they have provided to the JLC. Mr. O’Neill noted that many of the JLC membership terms will expire simultaneously, and urged the JLC member organizations to look for dedicated representatives to fill those vacancies. Commissioner Mangis agreed to provide the JLC with a list of the membership terms.

Chairman Wickersham thanked the JLC for its support, and said he looks forward to serving as Chairman during the coming year.

New Business

There was no New Business.

Public Comments

Sarah Costa of the Disabled American Veterans Department of Virginia said she was very impressed that, although JLC members had differing opinions, they were able to work together to achieve the common goal of serving veterans.

Mr. Miller emphasized the importance of the JLC in supporting disabled veterans returning from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, noting that it is important to lay the proper foundation now, so that these service men and women can be rehabilitated and become productive members of society in years to come.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the JLC was scheduled for September 14 at 11 a.m. in Richmond, with the meeting site to be determined.

Adjournment

The meeting concluded with Robert Gray reading a poem he wrote entitled “Forgotten Heroes.” There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:41 p.m.

Draft Minutes of the September 14, 2005 Meeting

DRAFT

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Wednesday, September 14, 2005, at the General Assembly Building – 5 West Conference Room in Richmond.

Members Present

John Bonnell, *Marine Corps League*; Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*; David Ellis, *NAUS*; Pat Green, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; John Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*; Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*; James Jones, *Korean War Veterans Association*; Jon Mangis, *Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services*; Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*; Tom Stephen, Jr., *Reserve Officers Association*; Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*; and Sam Wilder, *Association of the United States Army*.

Late Arrivals

Jim Aucoin, *AMVETS*; Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*

Members Absent

John Anderson, *Chairman, Board of Veterans Services*; George Dumas, *Homeless and Disabled Veterans*; John Dunleavy, *Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge*; Paul Fink, *U. S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association*; Robert Gray, *American Ex-Prisoners of War*; Connie O'Neill, *American Legion*; Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve*; Richard Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; R. Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*; and Peter Snelling, *Veterans of Foreign Wars Association*.

Others Present

Delegate Kirk Cox; Bert Boyd, Deputy Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; Roz Trent, Program Administrative Specialist III, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; Don Ferguson, Office of the Attorney General; Genevieve Oberski and Naim Mosby, Hunter Homes McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Materials Distributed

Meeting Agenda; draft Minutes of the July 13, 2005, meeting; JLC Membership Listing/Terms of Office; Department of Veterans Services Benefit Services Section Staff Levels; JLC 2006 Legislative Agenda; Resolution in Support of Fisher House at McGuire VA Medical Center

Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. at the General Assembly Building, Fifth Floor West Conference Room. Norman Jasper led the Council in reciting the pledge of allegiance to the American Flag and in prayer.

Roll Call of VSOs and Quorum Determination

The roll was called. Eleven of twenty-two voting members were recorded as present. It was determined that a quorum of the Council (12 of 22 voting members) was not present. It should be noted that at that time, the Chairman believed that 13 of the 22 voting members were required for a quorum, instead of just 12 of 22. Accordingly, Chairman Wickersham determined that the meeting would proceed in anticipation of other members' arrival, but that no issues would be voted on until a quorum was achieved.

Introduction of Guests

Chairman Wickersham introduced and welcomed Don Ferguson, Office of the Attorney General, who provides legal counsel to the JLC. He also stated that Delegate Kirk Cox would be addressing the Council on its 2006 legislative agenda and would be arriving around 12:00 noon. Lastly, Chairman Wickersham introduced and welcomed Genevieve Oberski, with the Hunter Homes McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center (McGuire VAMC), who would give a presentation to the JLC on the Fisher House Project to be built on the grounds of the McGuire VAMC in Richmond.

While awaiting the arrival of other JLC members, Chairman Wickersham requested Ms. Oberski to proceed with the Fisher House presentation. Ms. Oberski introduced Naim Mosby, project manager, who had been instrumental in developing the presentation and distributed informational packets. In summary, the presentation contained the following information:

Background information on the McGuire VAMC:

- Provides health care to 41,000 veterans and active duty military persons
- Provides specialty services: Cardiac Transplant Program; Spinal Cord Injury; Parkinson's Disease; Geriatric Center of Excellence in the VA healthcare system; and the Polytraumatic (Traumatic Brain Injury) Program
- Provides support for patients and families from all over the country and frequently treats patients whose families need overnight lodging.
 - refers 1,100 persons annually to the Hospitality House in downtown Richmond, at a cost of \$10 per night and is available dependant upon space, or
 - hotels in the area at a cost of \$70 per night

McGuire VAMC Fisher House Project:

- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), Congress, and the Fisher House Foundation recognize the need for a Fisher House at the McGuire VAMC
- The Fisher House is a home-away-from-home, similar to the Ronald McDonald House
- Long-term operation of the Fisher House will be the responsibility of the McGuire VAMC in collaboration with veterans service organization support, other community volunteers, the Fisher House Foundation, and the USDVA
- Fisher Houses are constructed by the Fisher House Foundation, then donated to the USDVA

- Fisher Houses provides support, respite and lodging for families of patients, both active duty and veterans, being treated at military or USDVA medical centers
- The Fisher House Foundation would match on a one-to-one basis the community donations to fund the \$3 million project
- Fundraising efforts are to begin in the fall of 2005
- Groundbreaking is projected in the spring of 2006
- Dedication of completed Fisher House in 2007

Discussion regarding the Fisher House project was entertained following the presentation. Chairman Wickersham questioned how much of the \$3 million project would the Fisher House Foundation fund. Ms. Oberski responded that the Foundation would provide half the funding. Commissioner Mangis referenced a telephone conversation he had with Ms. Oberski regarding a meeting that had been held with the Governor, on behalf of veterans service organizations, wherein a Resolution was presented to support a Fisher House at the McGuire VAMC. During the telephone conversation, the Ms. Oberski had questioned its ability to accept state money as part of the community effort towards the \$1½ million in community support (matching funds) required for project completion. Ms. Oberski clarified that the McGuire VAMC could not accept the funds, as it does not have 501(c) (3) status; however, she explained that the Fisher House Foundation could accept the funds, as long as the money goes from the state to the Fisher House Foundation in the name of construction for the Fisher House in Richmond. Ms. Oberski stated that she would communicate this to the Foundation, should this occur.

Mr. Wilder stated that many of his colleagues in other organizations have raised a significant amount of money towards assisting with lodging, etc. until the Fisher House is built and asked for the name of a contact person who would be able to respond to questions regarding this effort. Ms. Oberski responded that until the Fisher House is built, the McGuire VAMC could take donations towards providing lodging, meals, transportation support, etc. through a federal “general post fund.” The fund is managed by Janet Langhorne, Chief of Voluntary Services.

Donations may be made to the Fisher House Foundation online at www.fisherhouse.org or by mail, and should be designated for the McGuire VAMC Fisher House construction. She asked that the McGuire VAMC be notified when donations are given to assist them in making acknowledgements and keeping an accurate account of all donations.

It is planned that the Fisher House will be constructed in close proximity to the new Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center.

Review and Approval of July 13, 2005 Meeting Minutes

With the arrival of Mr. Schneider, *Non Commissioned Officers Association*, the number of Council members in attendance increased to twelve (12). Though this was enough for a quorum (12 of 22 voting members), it was believed at the time that 13 of 22 voting members were required, and hence that there were still not enough for a quorum.

Assistant Attorney General (AAG) Don Ferguson advised that no voting action could take place until a quorum was present.

Chairman Wickersham then asked if there were any comments, phrases, or recommendations to the minutes of the July 13th meeting, as written.

Mason Botts commented that two Resolutions were introduced at the last meeting, one of which had been omitted from the minutes. The first dealt with tuition, which was mentioned. However, the second resolution dealing with tax relief for retirees and the military, wherein government and military retirees were not allowed to pay their health insurance premiums with pre-tax dollars, had been omitted.

Chairman Wickersham reiterated that this was not a discussion item, simply a question to the minutes. There were no other recommended changes.

Unfinished Business

Since it was believed that there was no quorum present, Chairman Wickersham asked Vice Chairman Sam Wilder to review the Guard and Reserve issue. Mr. Wilder stated that at the last JLC meeting a Resolution was submitted to “Strengthen Virginias National Guard and Reserve.” It was discussed whether the Guard and Reserve was an appropriate issue for the JLC to undertake, however, it was agreed that this would be a JLC legislative agenda item. However, then-Chairman Connie O’Neill had stated at the last meeting that it would be an appropriate issue to discuss with the Governor. Mr. Wilder stated that he, Chairman Wickersham, Commissioner Mangis and other representatives from the Richmond Area Chapter of MOAA had met with the Governor and this was one of the major issues discussed. He stated that it was clear that Governor Warner was very appreciative of the JLC addressing the issue, whether or not it was not originally designed as a part of the JLC Constitution. The Governor suggested that the group attend the Citizen Soldier Support Council meeting. Bill Leighty, Governor’s Chief of Staff, made contact with the Council, and Mr. Wilder and Chairman Wickersham are scheduled to attend their October meeting to discuss this issue.

Mr. Wilder stated that as of now, the JLC is somewhat hampered in advocating the Guard and Reserve issue because the Virginia National Guard Association has not appointed a replacement for Ronald Shamblin, who resigned in May, and since the JLC has no representation/input from the Guard. He has contacted the Adjutant General of the Virginia National Guard, Major General Claude Williams. Delegate Cox had previously met with General Williams, and the National Guard stated that they were not ready to discuss legislative objectives at this time. However, the Chief of Recruiting, Colonel Harris, did attend the July meeting of MOAA’s Virginia Council of Chapters and gave a briefing on recruiting.

Chairman Wickersham had requested that the Resolution be made more specific. Mr. Wilder distributed a “*Revised Virginia National Guard Resolution.*” He stated that the National Guard is an important issue for both the state and the country. He stated that this is the #1 objective for MOAA, and that the #2 objective is strengthening the National

Guard and Reserve at the National Level. He has scheduled meetings with Congressman on this issue. The Revised resolution read as follows:

**Resolution of the Joint Leadership Council
to Strengthen Virginia's National Guard and Reserve**

Whereas, more than 350,000 members of the National Guard and Reserve Forces have been mobilized on lengthy call-ups since September 11th.

Whereas, National Guardsmen and reserve members can now expect multiple, lengthy activations over the course of a career and Governor Warner has said, "They have gone from being citizen soldiers to soldier citizens," and

Whereas, these frequent conditions are exacting hardships on guardsmen, reserve members and their families to an unprecedented degree, and are expected to continue for years, and

Whereas, Virginia's National Guard and Reserve Forces are experiencing serious recruiting and retention problems, with the Virginia National Guard at only 90% of authorized strength, and

Whereas, the strength of the Virginia National Guard and Reserve Forces are vital to the nation's national security, homeland defense, and protection of the Commonwealth during times of natural disasters, and

Whereas, the strength and vitality of the National Guard and Reserve Component must be a concern not only of the federal government, but also of the state government,

Resolved, that the JLC support and advocate the strengthening of Virginia's National Guard and Reserve as a top priority for both the executive and legislative branches of the government of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Resolved, that the JLC support and advocate specific objectives for the Commonwealth that accomplish the goal of a strengthened National Guard and Reserve, in particular to improve recruiting and retention. These specific objectives may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Increased state funding to double the size of the current recruiting force to at least 400, implement "unit recruiting" by recently returned combat veterans in their local areas, create a new statewide TV advertisement aimed specifically at "influencers," task and fund the Virginia War Memorial to add a video of the War on Terrorism and send to the high schools.

- Provide state tax credits and other incentives for employers to cover pay off-sets when their employees are mobilized
- Assist employers by providing monetary subsidies to continue health benefits for families when mobilized in those cases where TRICARE RESERVE SELECT is not effective
- Create and fund 3 family support centers in Central Virginia, Northern Virginia, and Hampton Roads equipped for video conferencing, e-mail, with financial support advisors.
- Improve state coordination with DOD's National Committee for Employer Support for the Guard and reserve by increasing training on USERRA for public and private employers – in particular small businesses.

Chairman Wickersham paused to ask the Secretary if a quorum was present. With the arrival of Jim Aucoin, *AMVETS*, a quorum was achieved. Chairman Wickersham stated that the Revised Resolution had not been included in the legislative agenda and opened for discussion. He called for any changes to the Resolution.

Pat Green made a motion that the JLC accept the Revised Resolution as written and then proceed to discussion. The motion was seconded.

Dan Miller stated that although he supported the concept, he felt that the JLC was the wrong forum to address the National Guard and Reserve issues based on the document given to AAG Don Ferguson in which federal legislation defines a "veteran" as someone who has previously served in the United States military without being dishonorably discharged. Mason Botts stated that the National Guard and Reserve would fall under this definition based on the fact that anyone currently serving is very likely to be a veteran, and would not be so if he/she had been dishonorably discharged. In this manner, the JLC would be extending the definition to the veterans of the future in addition the present veterans. Mr. Wilder stated that the definition should not be too narrow.

Chairman Wickersham asked for legal counsel. AAG Don Ferguson elaborated on the purpose of the JLC, referencing the enabling statute found in §2.2-2681 which gives information on the membership, terms, chairman, quorum and compensation. In addition, §2.2-2681 outlines the powers and duties of the JLC, all of which reference the term "veteran." He stated that the congressional definition of a "veteran" does not include active duty members, and the term "veteran" is not defined in the enabling legislation. He stated that JLC has a charter to do certain things, and it would be his opinion that the Council should address those specific things it is chartered to do before it takes on additional responsibilities. Further discussion ensued.

David Ellis suggested an amendment to bullet #3 of the Resolution. He stated that it should read as follows:

Assist employers by providing monetary subsidies to continue health benefits for families. ~~when mobilized in those cases where TRICARE RESERVE SELECT is not effective~~

There were no additional amendments to the Resolution.

Tom Stephen had questions regarding bullet #1 which referenced increasing the size of the recruiting force. He asked if the National Guard could increase their end strengths to meet this requirement or would it be taken from the current end strength level. Mr. Wilder responded that he had asked the Chief of Staff of the National Guard if the State could fund the increase, but he was unsure. Mr. Miller stated that it will cost the state a sizeable sum of money, and inquired if this will take away from other veteran-related issues that the JLC can support.

Mr. Wilder stated that the JLC needs to prioritize its issues. Jon Mangis stated that he felt if it came to a question of money, veterans issues will take priority over anything regarding active duty and the National Guard. Mr. Wilder stated that he would like the National Guard and Reserve to be included in the JLC priorities.

Chairman Wickersham stated that based on discussion, the National Guard and Reserve issue is an important one, and there were member organizations in the body that represent the Guard and the Reserve, as well as other member organizations in the body who had brought this issue as a priority. As noted by Mr. Wilder, the JLC has no representation from the Virginia National Guard Association, and the National Guard has its own Resolutions and legislative process. He stated that the JLC may find itself awkwardly too far in front of the normal course of action of the National Guard. Although noted that the Governor is very supportive of this issue, there are ramifications to consider. He called for a motion to accept the Resolution, as amended.

A motion was made to adopt the amendment to the Resolution, bullet #3 to read as follows:

Assist employers by providing monetary subsidies to continue health benefits for families.

The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

A roll call vote was then taken to include the National Guard Reserve in the 2006 JLC legislative agenda. There were 13-yeyes; 0-nays.

Mr. Green brought forward two items:

- In regards to the canteen at the Virginia Veterans Care Center, he stated that progress has been made on having a local veterans service organization (or group of VSOs) operate a canteen, but there were small complications concerning the Department of Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). He, Bert Boyd, Frank

Powell and others involved at the Veterans Care Center will meet on Thursday, September 22nd to resolve the issues. Once issues are resolved, it will set the precedence for all veterans care centers to be built in the future in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There will be a contract at any post wherein anyone desiring to take over the management of the veterans care center canteen will be able to do so in conjunction with DBVI. Questions were entertained.

Mr. Green explained that there is a contract between the Commonwealth of Virginia and DBVI stipulating that the blind will manage the vending machines in all state government buildings. A meeting was held with representatives explaining the operation of the canteen before the Veterans Care Center became state-operated. The vending machines will remain, but relocated to a better location for the veterans.

- Secondly, Mr. Green discussed the cemetery in southwest Virginia. Pulaski was identified as a possible location, given its central location in SW Virginia. Mr. Green stated that he had initially encountered problems in securing donated land from the Radford Army Ammunition Plant (RAAP), and that RAAP had reneged on the land that was originally promised to build the cemetery. He said that he then solicited the assistance of federal legislators to write letters to the Department of the Army asking why this was done, as well as soliciting the assistance of state legislators to bring this issue up in the next General Assembly session. After Mr. Green's information papers were reviewed, it was agreed that there is no cemetery available for veterans in southwest Virginia, and that the area had been identified as one of the places in the United States that is a #1 priority for a cemetery. It was verbally stated that any grant applications that the Commonwealth of Virginia sent forward would be accepted, as there is already money set aside to build a cemetery.

In summary, 91 acres of land is available for donation. Of that, 24 acres cannot be used at present; however, the federal government has agreed to clean up the land for future use. A meeting has been scheduled on September 21st to meet with the RAAP Commander and the coordinator from Alliant Techsystems, Inc. to further discuss this issue.

Following Mr. Green's report, Chairman Wickersham acknowledged that because there was a quorum, the minutes of the March 9th meeting needed to be approved. A motion was made by Mr. Botts that the minutes be approved with the suggested amendment discussed. Mr. Miller seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

New Business.

Mr. Green proposed a change to JLC Constitution that was passed in 2005 to address the quorum issue. Per the Constitution any changes must be proposed 30 days in advance and voted on at the following meeting. He confirmed that Commissioner Mangis had forwarded a copy of the proposed change to all members that had been appointed by the Governor.

The proposed change is as follows:

ART III: C.2. REF ALTERNATES

OMIT: ART III C.2. (and Alternates) and ADD the following:

The Organizational Representative will be appointed by the Governor of the State of Virginia. The Alternate will be appointed by the President of each member organization and must attend at least one JLC meeting each year with or without carrying a proxy vote of the appointed member. A written Proxy signed by the State President of the member organization must be presented at the JLC meeting for the Alternate to be able to vote at that meeting.

This change is within the following: ART III, B & C; ART A, 1, 2, 3

Mr. Green said that he believed that this change will ensure that there will be a quorum at each meeting. It was noted that the written proxy signed by the State VSO President must be presented each time an alternate attends a meeting. This will ensure that VSO Presidents become involved with the JLC. Discussion followed.

Chairman Wickersham stated that there would be no vote taken on this issue, and it will be tabled until the next meeting. He sought advice from AAG Don Ferguson regarding ways to address the quorum issue. AAG Ferguson stated that there are only two ways to resolve this issue. Both methods involve changing the enabling statute to read “*a representative may select a designee to sit in on a meeting in his/her absence as a proxy vote.*” The enabling statute provides that the Governor appoints the representative from each qualifying organization. It does not say that the Governor appoints a representative and an alternate, nor does it give the representative authority to designate an alternate.

Chairman Wickersham stated that a formal review committee would be established for the Constitution and By-Laws. Members are as follows: Chairman Wickersham, Mason Botts, David Ellis, Pat Green, and Dan Miller. The committee will work to effect the change to the Constitution.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Mangis reported as follows:

Benefits

During the last two legislative sessions, a number of positions were approved. The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) will have filled all authorized positions by the end of October. Negotiations for office space in Fairfax and Alexandria are taking place. The northern Virginia offices will be located with Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) offices. This is an excellent program to feed information back/forth, especially when dealing with disabled vets.

A Benefits Services Section Staff Level spreadsheet is included in the agenda packets. The spreadsheet denoted that there were full time offices in Tidewater and Portsmouth; however, these are itinerant points, **NOT** full-time offices as shown.

The Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC)

- The USDVA deeded the SBVCC property on July 4, 2005 and final approval of the grant was received on July 30th. The Office of the Attorney General was heavily involved in negotiations.
- Due to the increased costs of construction since the date of the grant, problems have incurred regarding the ground breaking. The contractor is trying to hold his sub-contractors to original bids. Equipment will be on-site the beginning of next week.
- In order for construction of the SBVCC to begin, the Director of the McGuire VAMC requested that the walking trail be replaced. This was a result of an verbal agreement that had been made a number of years ago between the then Director of the McGuire VAMC and the then Care Center Board of Trustees. The agreement was that if the McGuire VAMC would transfer up to 20 acres of land on their reservation for construction of a veterans care center, the Commonwealth would build a new veterans care center on their property and would, in turn, replace the existing walking trail (which was on the proposed construction site) with a walking trail on another site on the VAMC grounds.
- However, there were no funds in the construction budget to do so. Commissioner Mangis contacted the VA National Guard (VANG) and the Governor's Office for assistance, and the VANG has agreed to construct the replacement trail. Work will begin on October 1, the beginning of the new Federal Fiscal Year. The VANG will cut the trail approximate $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile and place gravel, but has no capability to provide the asphalt. The VANG also needs funds to pay for the gravel and for the diesel fuel that will be consumed on the project. Commissioner Mangis is working with VDOT, through the Governors Office, to provide the asphalt and gravel. VDOT is now working with the National Guard. The new walking trail should be completed by mid to late October.
- A date for the ground breaking ceremony has not yet been selected. Schedules between the Governor and USDVA officials are being coordinated. Once a date is selected, JLC members will receive invitations. Commissioner Mangis stated that if JLC members desired, he would schedule the architects to give a description of what the facility will look like. It will have 160 skilled nursing beds; the domiciliary beds will be done at a later date. The state has already appropriated money during the last General Assembly session, and the federal grant already been applied for.

Virginia Veterans Care Center

- Renovation at the Virginia Veterans Care Center is underway. A new storage

building, new carpeting and laundry will be replaced.

- As already reported by Pat Green, the canteen agreement will be resolved with DBVI. State law requires that the blind and visually impaired be given first bids in running/operating concessions in state-owned property. The reason this was not done previously is because the Virginia Veterans Care Center was contracted out to a private company for operation, and the private company allowed the canteen to be operated differently. When the state took over, the canteen was shut down, and state guidelines had to be followed. However, a meeting is scheduled with DBVI, and it is anticipated that this issue will be resolved.

Cemeteries

- The Virginia Veterans Cemetery (in Amelia) conducted 16 burials in July and 16 in August. In comparison, the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (in Suffolk) conducted 42 burials in July and 40 in August. The high burial rate at the Horton Cemetery is expected to continue based on the large retiree population in the Tidewater area. The department is looking at the need for a second committal shelter at the Horton Cemetery. The Commissioner complimented Cemetery Administrator Dan Kemano, who manages day-to-day operations at the Horton Cemetery and also is responsible for the Amelia cemetery, for the wonderful job he had done.
- Commissioner Mangis reiterated Pat Green's statement that the driving factor for the building of a third cemetery in southwest Virginia is a commitment from the federal government to fund the construction. He said that a representative of the USDVA's State Cemetery Grants Program will need to look at the property to ascertain if it is suitable for a cemetery. A visit has already been arranged. He said that the project is not without cost for the state. The Commonwealth must own the land and must pay for the architectural & engineering study to determine the proper design/layout. He noted that this was a relatively expensive project. When the grant is approved by the USDVA, the state would be reimbursed for the architectural & engineering study costs. The state would incur operating costs after the cemetery is turned over after completion, including paying to staff the cemetery. Commissioner Mangis commended Pat Green and Jim Walker for their efforts and the work that had been done on this endeavor.

Supermarket of Veterans Benefits

- The most recent veteran's supermarket was held on August 24th in Wytheville. This was the most successful so far, with over 200 veterans attending and over 34 different organizations, including the USDVA, TRICARE, Social Security, the Salem VAMC, veterans organizations, etc.
- The next supermarket will be held on October 20th at the Rappahannock Community College in Warsaw. Commissioner Mangis encouraged JLC members to help spread the word.

Budget

- Commissioner Mangis stated that the Department will probably need the support of the JLC on the DVS budget. In order to meet the construction costs, there is a capital construction project in for moveable equipment and other additional costs.

Mr. Botts asked how he could get additional information on the October 20th Warsaw Supermarket from the website. Commissioner Mangis stated that the department has a contract with the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) to revise the DVS website to give more up-to-date information. Presently, the website, www.dvs.virginia.gov, does list the supermarket, but gives general information.

Mr. Green recommended that Chairman Wickersham and the Commissioner attend the joint meetings of the state legislature and let them know that the JLC represented a total of 2.6 million votes in the state of Virginia and the Department has the organization's support.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Arrival of Delegate Kirk Cox

Chairman Wickersham introduced and welcomed Delegate Kirk Cox. Delegate Cox stated that he had come to give his impression of the upcoming General Assembly session; his impression of the JLC legislative agenda, and his advocacy.

Upcoming General Assembly Session

- Delegate Cox stated that there is a surplus in state government. The rainy-day-fund is almost fully funded to about \$1 billion. However, it is always unpredictable how the economy will be. With the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, and high oil prices, it is hard to predict how the revenues will be this fall. The real estate market, however, continues to do well.
- This is mentioned because many of the JLC legislative agenda will be somewhat dependent upon how the economy is going. If the economy is going well, legislators will be willing to look at new initiatives; however, if the economy is on the down-swing, legislators will be more cautious.
- There will be a new Governor during the session, who will undoubtedly have his/her own agenda.

JLC Legislative Agenda

- Delegate Cox stated that DVS has already included some of the agenda items in the Department budget, and the JLC will have to wait until the Governor's Budget is released. If legislative agenda items are included in the Governor's budget, the likelihood is that it will stay in the Governor's budget. If legislative agenda items

are not in the Governor's budget, it will be an uphill battle. At that time, the JLC must focus on the top 1 or 2 most important issues.

- Most JLC legislative items are appropriations-driven. The full Appropriations Committee is driven by sub-committee recommendations. Sub-committee members should be lobbied first. If items are included in the sub-committee, JLC members should try to get allies on the committee to carry the legislation.

Advocacy

- Legislators should be visited in the summer or fall. The most effective advocate is the delegate in your specific local district. During the months of August, September, October and November, appointments at the legislator's home office are most effective. Waiting until the session begins in January is most difficult to introduce an issue.

Questions were entertained. Mr. Botts asked a question in regards to the changing of the Constitution of the JLC. Delegate Cox suggested that a meeting with the patron who carried the original legislation be held to determine if he/she will or will not support the change. If the patron is not supportive, JLC members will need to explain the new position. If support is given, this will be good. If you still cannot get the original patron to support the change, try to get someone who is generally familiar with the issues who could argue the issue. It is always good to get bi-partisan support.

Mr. Miller thanked Delegate Cox for all he had and is doing for the veterans of Virginia. Chairman Wickersham also thanked Delegate Cox for taking the time to meet with the JLC.

Chairman's Comments

Chairman Wickersham made the following comments:

- Solicited members to discuss the General Assembly process and the JLC legislative agenda/issues with their respective organizations.
- Proposed that there will be a recommended campaign plan for strategies for executing the procedures (General Assembly procedures and the legislative enabling statute)
- Now is the time to meet with legislators – do not wait until January.
- A campaign plan has already been written and will include a list of the targeted people (legislators) to meet with to make JLC members' jobs easy in advocating the legislative agenda. The list of key state legislators was distributed.
- The JLC was formed to "sing the same song" and represents a vast number of people in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- The JLC is off to a great start. Those agenda items that do not get included in the 2006 session will be reintroduced in the 2007 session

The Chairman stated that he will communicate with JLC members to make sure there is a quorum at meetings. Mr. Botts suggested that the Commissioner's Office send communications and make telephone calls at least two weeks before the meetings.

Determination of Date and Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the JLC will be held on Wednesday, March 15, 2006, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. The tentative location will be it the Pocahontas Building Conference Room, located at 900 East Main Street, Richmond. Meeting place will be confirmed and members will be contacted. Attempts will be made to arrange for parking.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 p.m.